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THE

SPANISH MATCH;

OR,

CHARLES STUART AT MADRID.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

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VOL. II.

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THE SPANISH MATCH.

BOOK III.

THE CONDE-DUQUE DE OLIVAREZ.

How Buckingham was presented to Olivarez.

BUCKINGHAM and Gondomar, entering the coach of the latter, drove to the palace of the Conde-Duque de Olivarez, a noble edifice, charmingly situated at the northern extremity of the Calle de Alcala, on the brow of the eminence overlooking the woody valley of the Prado.

The internal arrangements of the mansion corresponded with its superb exterior. Excepting the royal palace, no other princely residence in Madrid possessed such a splendid suite of apartments as the palace of the Conde-Duque. On the side of the Prado was a broad terrace forming a delightful promenade, and communicating with the vast garden at the rear of the noble pile. The grand façade of the palace looked towards the Calle de Alcala, from which it was separated by a broad and well-paved court, defended by a gilt railing. In the centre of the railing was a lofty iron gateway, very elaborately and beautifully wrought, and embellished with the armorial bearings of the ancient and illustrious house of Guzman.

As Buckingham drove through this gateway, and contemplated the imposing façade, he could not help acknowledging that it was an abode worthy of a great minister. But the splendour of the palace increased his desire to lower the pride of its owner. Buckingham hated Olivarez because he possessed the same sort of influence over Philip IV. that he himself had over James I. He looked upon the Spanish minister as a rival and an enemy, whose humiliation would heighten his own glory.

At the period of which we write, the three most important kingdoms in Europe were governed by favourites, supreme and almost irresponsible power being confined to them by their respective sovereigns. Thus the destinies of France were committed to Richelieu — those of Spain to Olivarez — those of England to Buckingham. By far the ablest and most sagacious of the three was Richelieu, and not without reason he despised his rivals. Still they were formidable from the power they possessed, and, united, might have crushed him. But the mutual distrust entertained of each other by Buckingham and Olivarez prevented any such alliance. There was no league possible between two ministers, each of whom believed that the other was playing false. With this insight into Buckingham's breast, it will easily be understood

with what feelings he regarded his approaching meeting with his rival.

But before describing that meeting, let us say a word as to the powerful Spanish minister.

Don Gaspar Guzman, Conde-Duque de Olivarez, had risen to his present eminent position, when Philip IV., at that time too young to undertake the charge of government, ascended the throne. Before that period, by attaching himself zealously to the youthful prince, Olivarez had succeeded in obtaining unbounded influence over him. Consequently, on Philip's accession to power his own elevation was certain. His ascendancy over the feeble monarch was absolute, and Philip, without an effort, resigned himself to the sway of his favourite.

Olivarez had many qualities that well fitted him for the important post he occupied — great capacity for business, unwearied application, shrewdness, and caution. But he was arrogant, vindictive, and unrelenting, and his harshness made him numerous enemies. Perfidious himself, he was distrustful of others. His leading idea was to give a preponderating influence in Europe to the House of Austria, and he thought that the marriage of the Infanta with the heir to the throne of England would further his designs, but suspicious of James and Buckingham, he was resolved not to permit the completion of the match till he had secured

solid advantages for Spain, and with this view he protracted the negotiation on one pretext or another, constantly making a fresh demand when any point had been conceded. Disgusted by his perpetual subterfuges, Bristol was more than once on the point of breaking 'off the treaty; but this was not what Olivarez desired, and by promises and professions, never meant to be fulfilled, he succeeded in cajoling the English ambassador.

Olivarez was now in the very prime of life, being between thirty and forty. He possessed a countenance of great shrewdness and intelligence lighted up by large penetrating black eyes, which seemed to emit flashes of fire when he was animated or angry. His complexion was exceedingly dark; his features regular and handsome. He was of middle height, and well formed. In manner he was a thorough Castilian, cold, reserved, and exceedingly haughty, but his arrogance could be laid aside if needful.

Such was Don Gaspar de Guzman, Conde-Duque de Olivarez, chief Cupbearer to the king, Grand Master of the Horse, chief of the Council of State, and prime minister.

The aim of Olivarez was to surpass the Duke of Lerma in splendour, so he kept up a princely retinue, and gave magnificent entertainments. Like his royal master, he was a great patron of the arts,

and had a splendid gallery of pictures; to which he was constantly making large additions.

The Countess de Olivarez, who was some ten years younger than her lord, and sprung from an illustrious Andalusian family, possessed all the beauty and witchery of a daughter of that sunny region, and was esteemed one of the loveliest and sprightliest dames of the court. The gallants averred that the Conde-Duque was foolish enough to be jealous of his charming spouse, but they did not venture to add that she gave him cause for jealousy.

Though Olivarez had spies at the court of Whitehall, who gave him early information of every matter of moment, yet, owing to the precautions taken by James in closing the ports, no intelligence of the prince's journey had reached him, and being totally ignorant of the arrival of the travellers in Madrid, he was quite unprepared for Buckingham's visit.

He was standing at the time with the countess on a broad marble balcony overlooking the valley of the Prado, his gaze wandering over the woody valley from the ancient monasterio de Atocha to the Puerta de Recoleta, midway between which his palace was situated, when an usher announced the Conde de Gondomar.

"His lordship is not alone," continued the usher.

"There is a caballero with him, whom he did not name, but who looks like a person of distinction."

"Did the count request a private audience, Juan?" asked Olivarez.

"No, my lord," returned the usher. "I think he merely desires to present to your excellency the caballero I have mentioned, who appears to be a stranger."

"I will come to them instantly," said the Conde-Duque.

The usher bowed and retired.

"Come with me, madam," said Olivarez to the countess. "Gondomar may desire to present this stranger to you."

They then passed through the open casement into a large and splendidly-furnished apartment, at the farther end of which stood Gondomar and Buckingham.

The tall and stately figure of Buckingham at once caught the eye of Olivarez, and though he was far from suspecting the truth, he felt certain that the stranger was no ordinary individual.

"What a noble-looking person!" exclaimed the duchess, who was equally struck by Buckingham's appearance. "Who can he be?"

"We shall learn that soon enough," rejoined the Conde-Duque, somewhat sharply. "Something warns me he is an enemy."

"Poh! your excellency is always suspicious," said the duchess.

On his part, Buckingham regarded his rival with equal curiosity.

The Conde-Duque, we may mention, was attired in a doublet and cloak of tawny taffeta, thickly laced with silver. His hat, which he had put on, was fastened at the side by a superb diamond brooch, and adorned with tawny plumes.

The countess, who moved with the incomparable grace of an Andalusian dame, and who had the smallest feet imaginable, and the largest eyes, was dressed in black satin, deeply fringed with black lace; and though the attire was simple, none could have better suited her exquisite figure. Her ebon tresses were draped in a magnificent black lace mantilla, and harmonised well with her rich Southern complexion and splendid black eyes, soft as velvet, and shaded by long silken lashes. In her hand she carried a fan.

"Is that the duchess?" inquired Buckingham, who was greatly struck by her beauty.

Gondomar replied in the affirmative, adding, "She is a charming creature; but do not fall in love with her. Olivarez is as jealous as a Moor."

"I make no promises," replied Buckingham, smiling. "Those eyes are enough to tempt Saint Anthony himself."

Gondomar then moved on, followed by Buckingham, and approaching Olivarez, said, "Permit me to present to your excellency the Lord Marquis of Buckingham, who is newly arrived in Madrid."

Master as he usually was of himself, Olivarez absolutely started with surprise at the announcement.

"What! my lord of Buckingham here!" he exclaimed.

"So this is the Marquis of Buckingham! I felt sure it must be some very important personage!" mentally ejaculated the countess.

"Ay, your excellency," replied Buckingham, bowing. "I have been sent by my royal master, the King of England, to see whether we cannot bring this long protracted marriage-treaty to a happy issue."

"You may account it concluded, since such is your errand, my dear lord," said Olivarez. "This indeed is a joyful surprise. I am delighted to see your lordship, and so, I am sure, will be his majesty."

"Your excellency is most obliging," replied Buckingham, bowing. "But let me entreat you to present me to the countess."

Olivarez instantly complied, and profound salutations were exchanged between them. After a few compliments had passed, Buckingham said, "I think

there is a better chance that the match may be speedily concluded, as the Prince of Wales has come in person to claim his bride."

At this unexpected announcement the minister's dark cheek flushed, but he quickly recovered himself, and gave vent to the most extravagant protestations of delight.

"His majesty must be made instantly acquainted with the welcome news of the prince's arrival," he said. "It will gladden him as much as it does me. Your lordship, I trust, will accompany me to the palace, when I will present you to my royal master, and you can make the gladsome tidings known to him with your own lips. Everything shall be done to manifest our sense of the signal honour conferred upon us. After you have seen the king, I will go with you to pay my reverence to the prince."

"The prince must be a model of gallantry to undertake this journey for his mistress," said the countess. "I long to announce his arrival to the Infanta."

"Then come with us to the palace," said the Conde-Duque. "You shall be the first to give her the joyous intelligence."

"Not quite the first," said Gondomar, aside, to Buckingham.

Shortly afterwards a splendid carriage, drawn by four horses, and attended by a mounted escort, was

dashing along the Calle de Alcalá, in the direction of the royal palace. The large windows of this roomy carriage showed that there were four persons inside it, three of whom were immediately recognised by those who gazed at the gorgeous equipage, but the fourth was a stranger.

II.

Philip IV.

ON that morning, Philip had given a private audience to the Nuncio, and the Papal envoy was still with the king, when Olivarez, unannounced, entered the royal cabinet. It being quite evident, from the minister's looks, that he had matter of importance to communicate to his majesty, the Nuncio immediately arose and prepared to retire.

"A moment, monseñor," said Olivarez, stopping him; "let me ask whether you have heard further from his Holiness? Will he send the dispensation for the marriage of the Infanta with the Prince of Wales?"

"Not till he receives positive assurance that better terms will be made with England," replied the Nuncio. "The matter rests entirely with your excellency. His Holiness knows your desire to promote the interests of the Church of Rome, and when you deem it expedient, the dispensation will be sent — but not till then."

"Enough, monseñor," replied Olivarez, bowing. "In all probability it will be soon required."

"I rejoice to hear it, my lord," said the Nuncio, "for I infer that you expect to gain your point." And bowing to the minister, he quitted the cabinet.

"I am not so sanguine as your excellency appears to be," remarked Philip, as soon as they were alone. "I do not think we shall extort any further concessions from the King of England."

"It is in your majesty's power to impose upon him any conditions you think proper," said Olivarez.

"How?" exclaimed Philip. "What has changed the aspect of affairs?"

"An act of folly — inconceivable folly — on the part of the British Solomon," returned Olivarez. "What will your majesty say if I tell you that this crafty and suspicious monarch has exhibited a blind confidence scarcely to be looked for in a rash and inexperienced youth?"

"What has he done? Explain yourself, my lord!" cried Philip.

"He has parted with his son — with the heir to the throne — and consigned him to your majesty's care."

"I cannot think you are trifling with me, my lord," said Philip. "Yet what you say sounds like a jest."

"It is scarcely credible, I own, sire; but, nevertheless, it is true that the Prince of Wales is now in Madrid. He arrived here last night, having ridden the whole distance by post, like a courier, attended only by the Marquis of Buckingham and three other gentlemen, and is now lodged with the Earl of Bristol."

"Amazement!" exclaimed the king. "And you had no intelligence of this journey, my lord? — you, who are usually so well informed."

"The journey appears to have been so suddenly resolved upon, and such precautions were taken to keep it secret, that information could not possibly be sent me," replied Olivarez. "For three days the ports were kept rigorously closed by James, so that no couriers could overtake the prince, and he and the marquis travelled under feigned names, and speeded on without halt, save for a day at Paris."

"By Santiago! a gallant exploit!" cried Philip. "Charles Stuart seems to have the spirit of a knight errant."

"Whatever spirit he may possess, he has committed a great imprudence," said Olivarez. "It is now for your majesty to consider what course you will pursue in regard to him."

"No consideration is required, my lord. There is but one course to pursue — receive him with open

arms," cried Philip. "He has trusted to my loyalty, and shall find he has not misjudged me."

"I do not desire to check your majesty's noble impulses," rejoined Olivarez, "but you must not throw away the extraordinary advantage you have gained. Receive the prince, as you propose, with all cordiality and honour. But his marriage with the Infanta must not take place till his conversion has been effected."

"That, indeed, would be a masterstroke," said Philip, after a moment's reflection. "But do you really think it can be achieved?"

"Nothing so easy, sire, now we have him here. He has been foolish in coming to us, but we should be doubly foolish if we let him go back without gaining our point."

"Such conduct appears to me disloyal and unworthy," said Philip.

"It is perfectly justifiable," rejoined Olivarez. "The prince has not been lured hither by any false promises from your majesty or from me, but has come of his own free will, and must take the consequences of his rashness. I should be unworthy of the post I hold if I did not prescribe a course from which, I trust, your majesty will not swerve. As I have said, let the prince be received with all honour. But he must be virtually a prisoner."

A cloud came over Philip's brow.

"A prisoner! Charles Stuart a prisoner!" he exclaimed. "I disapprove of the plan, my lord."

"Your majesty misapprehends me," said Olivarez. "I do not mean that the prince shall be subjected to any personal restraint. His prison shall be a chamber in this palace, his gaolers shall be your majesty and myself, nor shall he be aware that he is a captive unless he attempts to depart. He must be detained, on one pretext or another, till such time as we have accomplished our purpose. You must give him all sorts of grand entertainments — fêtes, masques, banquets, tournaments, and bull-fights. But, above all, your majesty must assign him and the marquis apartments in the palace, so that, without appearing to restrain them, you may have them in safe keeping. Our plans can then be put into operation for effecting the prince's conversion, and to this most desirable end the Infanta herself will be an important instrument. And now, having hastily explained my views, I must inform your majesty that the lord marquis is in the ante-chamber, anxiously waiting to be presented to you."

Philip, desiring that Buckingham should be at once admitted, Olivarez left the cabinet, returning the next moment with the marquis and Gondomar.

Buckingham threw himself on his knees before the king, but Philip instantly raised him.

"My first duty is to deliver this letter to your majesty," said the marquis, producing a despatch. "It is from the king my master. In it he recommends the prince his son to your majesty, and explains the motive of his highness's journey."

So saying, with a profound reverence he presented the letter to the king.

"I thank you, my good lord," said Philip. "I will read the letter anon. Had I known of his highness's coming, he should have had a reception worthy of him, and should have been escorted from the frontiers of the kingdom to this city. I myself would have met him at Burgos, attended by all the grandees of my court. Believe me, I am sensibly touched by the gallantry and courage he has displayed. I long to behold him and embrace him, and thank him for the honour he has done me and my sister, the Infanta Maria."

"His highness is equally anxious to behold your majesty," returned Buckingham, "and only awaits your gracious permission to present himself."

"No, no, that must not be," said Philip. "His highness has no suitable equipage — no retinue. He is lodged at the Earl of Bristol's casa, as I understand. I will visit him there."

"Pardon me, sire, if I venture, in his highness's name, to decline the proffered honour," rejoined Buckingham. "The prince would never permit to

great a condescension on your part. He feels that he ought first to wait on your majesty."

"But I must insist," cried Philip.

"Nay, sire, if you are resolved, the prince must of course give way," replied Buckingham.

"I will arrange the matter, so that there shall be no violation of etiquette," interposed Olivarez. "Your majesty and the prince shall meet on equal terms. With your permission, sire, I will attend my lord of Buckingham to pay my respects to his highness."

"Go, my lord," replied Philip; "and tell his highness that I am enchanted to hear of his arrival in Madrid, and but for certain forms, would fly to welcome and embrace him. Say all this for me, my lord, and add that I place my palace at his disposal, and that there is nothing he can ask that I will not grant — nothing I will leave undone to gratify and content him. You have heard what I say, my good lord," he added to Buckingham, "and will not fail, I trust, to repeat my words to the prince your master."

Buckingham bowed profoundly.

"Conde de Gondomar," pursued Philip, "it may be agreeable to the Prince of Wales to have your attendance. It is my pleasure, therefore, that you attach yourself to the person of his highness during

his stay in Madrid. Assist him with your counsel in all things, as if you were an Englishman."

"It will delight me to obey your majesty," said Gondomar, bowing.

"And now, my lords," said Philip, "I pray you hasten to the prince, and bid him welcome in my name. Be not niggard in your speech. Aught you may say will fall short of what I desire to convey."

"The prince shall have an exact report of all your gracious expressions, sire," returned Buckingham.

And bowing profoundly, he quitted the cabinet with Olivarez and Gondomar.

III.

Padre Ambrosio.

At the same hour, in another apartment of the palace, sat the Infanta, with Doña Elvira de Medanilla and her meninas. The princess was engaged in embroidering a cushion, but did not proceed very sedulously with her task, and her silence and preoccupied manner attracted the notice of her attendants.

It was a relief when the Countess de Olivarez entered the chamber. The countess was a great favourite with the Infanta, and on seeing her, Maria immediately laid down her embroidery and flew to embrace her.

"What happy chance brings you to the palace so early this morning, countess?" inquired the Infanta.

"I accompanied the Conde-Duque, who has some affairs to transact with his majesty," replied the countess. "But I want to have a word with you in private, princess."

On hearing this, Doña Elvira and the meninas prepared to withdraw.

"I hope your ladyship will be able to extract some conversation from the princess," said Doña Elvira. "She has scarcely opened her lips this morning."

"What has made you so dull, princess?" inquired the countess, as the dueña quitted the room.

"I know not," replied the Infanta, blushing. "I have a slight headache. I did not sleep well last night."

"You did not dream of the prince, your suitor; I suppose?" said the countess.

"How strange you should ask me the question," returned Maria. "Yes, I *did* dream of him. I thought he had come to Madrid on purpose to see me."

"Can she have heard?" mentally exclaimed the countess, surprised. "But no! no! that is impossible. Was that all your dream, princess?" she added, playfully.

"No," replied Maria, "there was a great deal more. I thought the prince obtained admittance to the palace in the disguise of a page."

"Oh! indeed!" exclaimed the countess. "He was disguised as a page, eh? Pray go on, princess. I am deeply interested by your recital. Did the disguised prince speak to you?"

"Of course. I could not let him go without a word, since he had come so far to see me."

"I hope you have not mentioned your dream to any one else, princess?" remarked the countess. "You must not attempt to deceive me. You have seen your lover. You have spoken with him. I came to inform you of his arrival in Madrid, but I find he has been beforehand with me. Well, I am not surprised at it. Such gallantry was to be expected from a lover so enterprising. But I trust to Heaven the adventure may not be discovered."

"No fear of that," cried the Infanta. "But have you seen the prince, countess?"

"No, but I have seen his favourite, the Marquis of Buckingham, who has accompanied him on the journey, and who is a splendid-looking personage. Is the prince as handsome as you expected?"

"Much handsomer. He has noble features — the finest eyes I ever beheld — and a charming expression of countenance."

"Then you feel that you really *can* love him, eh?"

"I fear that I love him already, and that is what troubles me," returned the Infanta.

"The conviction need give you no uneasiness," remarked the countess, smiling. "The prince has a right to your heart."

"He will have, when we are affianced," replied Maria. "But that ceremonial cannot take place until after his conversion. I told him so last night."

"You were too hasty. Suppose the prince should refuse to change his creed?"

"Then he must go back without me."

"Ah! you will think differently when you have seen more of him," said the countess. "If he is really as charming as you describe him, you will never be able to refuse him, even though he should continue obstinate in his heresy. Were I in your place, I should not allow a question of faith to interfere with my happiness."

"Listen to me, countess," said the Infanta, "and I will open my heart to you. A struggle has long been going on in my breast between my sense of duty and my affections. So much has been said to me of Prince Charles, and the possibility of my marriage with him has been so much discussed, that I could not fail to dwell upon his image, and though I had never seen him, I began to love him. My

heart was wholly unoccupied, and his image fixed itself there. I could think of no one else. I gazed upon his picture till I fancied it endowed with life. He haunted my dreams at night. Questioned by my confessor, I explained the state of my feelings to him, and was reproved sharply for my indulgence in such idle fancies, and enjoined to turn away my thoughts from the prince. 'You must never wed him, princess,' said Padre Ambrosio, 'unless he will consent to abjure his heresies and enter into the bosom of our Church. If you do, you will endanger your soul.'

"But if Pope Gregory XV. sends the dispensation, you may wed the prince without any apprehension," rejoined the countess. "Besides, many marriages are made between Romanists and Protestants without the consent of his Holiness."

"So I remarked to Padre Ambrosio," observed the Infanta, "but he contends that no princess can so wed without a dispensation; and he affirms that the Pope is averse to the match, and will never consent to it unless the prince is converted."

"How comes Padre Ambrosio to be so well informed as to his Holiness's intentions?" asked the countess.

"The Nuncio has shown him a letter from the Pope," replied the Infanta. "Thus you see, countess, that I am bound to check all my impulses of

affection towards the prince. This was an easy task formerly — but now that I have seen him — now that I have encountered his ardent gaze — now that I have listened to his protestations of love — my feelings are no longer under my control. I love Charles Stuart, countess — I love him. I dare not confess so much to Padre Ambrosio; but to you, who can sympathise with me, I will avow the truth.”

“I do sincerely sympathise with you, sweet princess,” said the countess, “but I see no reason for anxiety. Had not the prince come to claim you I believe the match would never have taken place, but now that he is here all difficulties will vanish.”

“You really think so, countess?” cried the Infanta, joyfully.

“I do, indeed,” she replied, with an earnestness that left no doubt of her sincerity.

“Will you let me talk to you about the prince sometimes?” said the Infanta. “I have no friend — no confidante. I dare not speak to the king my brother — I cannot speak to the queen.”

“You shall have a friend and adviser in me, princess, and if you will follow my counsels all will go well, in spite of Padre Ambrosio.”

At this moment a side-door opened, and the person alluded to entered the room. Padre Ambrosio was tall, dark, spare in figure, and had a

searching look and a stern expression of countenance.

"I see my news has been anticipated, princess," he said, glancing at the countess. "I came to tell you that the Prince of Wales has most unexpectedly arrived in Madrid."

"Yes, father, the princess has already received the joyful intelligence from me," rejoined the countess.

"What interpretation does your ladyship put upon his journey?" demanded Padre Ambrosio.

"What other interpretation can I put, except that he has come to fetch his bride?" she answered.

"That is one motive, doubtless, but not the principal motive. He would not have come hither in this manner unless he designed to become a convert."

"Oh no, you are mistaken, father," cried the Infanta. "The prince has no such design."

"How know you that, princess? You have not seen him — ha?" cried Padre Ambrosio, quickly.

"What a question to ask, father?" interposed the countess. "How can she have seen him?"

"She appears confused," muttered Padre Ambrosio, as he watched the Infanta. "There is some concealment here."

At this moment Doña Elvira entered the room.

"All the palace is in excitement," she cried. "They say the Prince of Wales has arrived."

"It is perfectly true," replied the countess. "He arrived last night, but no announcement of the event was made till this morning."

"A singular circumstance occurred last night, which I cannot help connecting with the prince's arrival," said Doña Elvira. "There was a page in the palace who was unknown to all the other meninos, and no one can tell how he obtained admittance. We passed him as we left the great salon after the concert. Now I recollect, your highness spoke to him."

"Did I?" said the Infanta, quite unable to hide her confusion from the keen eye of the confessor.

"Did your highness remark that he was a stranger?" asked Padre Ambrosio.

"I took but little notice of him," she replied. "The Conde de Gondomar was with him."

"It was the prince in disguise — I am sure of it," muttered Padre Ambrosio. "Would your highness know that page again if you beheld him?" he asked.

"I should," interposed Doña Elvira.

Just then the door was thrown open, and the king entered the room.

"You have heard the news, Maria?" he cried embracing his sister, as she flew towards him.

"I have, sire," she replied.

"I make no doubt you are impatient to behold your lover," he said. "You shall soon be gratified with a sight of him. I will engage him to drive in the Prado this evening. You shall drive there too, with the queen and myself, and then you can obtain a view of him as we pass his coach."

"I thank your majesty for your gracious consideration," replied the Infanta.

"I, myself, am most anxious to behold him," pursued Philip, "and would gladly have visited him at the casa of the Earl of Bristol, where he is lodged, but he stands punctiliously upon etiquette. With the romantic character he has displayed in this expedition, I almost wonder he did not present himself at the palace this morning, and solicit an interview with you, Maria."

"Your majesty is pleased to jest," replied the Infanta, blushing. "The prince must be too well aware of the rigorous etiquette practised at our court to transgress it."

"Humph!" muttered Padre Ambrosio.

"I long to behold the prince," remarked the Countess de Olivarez. "If he at all resembles his favourite, the Marquis of Buckingham, he must be very handsome."

"Yes, he is very handsome," echoed the Infanta, abstractedly.

"You speak as if you had seen him," remarked the king.

"I have his portrait, as you know, sire," she rejoined.

"Well, we shall all be able to judge of his appearance anon," said Philip. "He is reported to be the most chivalrous and accomplished prince in Europe, and I dare say he will not belie the description given of him. During the drive you must tie a white riband round your arm, Maria, so that the prince may know you."

"That precaution is scarcely necessary, methinks, sire," observed Padre Ambrosio, with a certain significance. "The prince cannot fail to recognise her highness."

"Possibly not," rejoined the king, smiling. "But it is best to make sure. And now adieu, sweet sister. Prepare yourself for a sight of your future consort. I shall give orders that all the nobles of the court repair to the Prado this evening. You will be there, countess. I now go to acquaint her majesty with the unlooked-for occurrence."

With this, he again affectionately embraced his sister, and bowing to the countess, quitted the room.

"Stay with me awhile," whispered the Infanta to the countess. "I have more to say to you, and

do not desire to be left alone with Doña Elvira and Padre Ambrosio."

"I will stay as long as you please," replied the countess.

IV.

Of the Visit paid by Olivares to Charles.

ACCOMPANIED by Buckingham and Gondomar, and escorted by a mounted guard, as before, Olivarez drove to the House of Seven Chimneys, for the purpose of paying his homage to the prince.

On his arrival the minister was ushered into the prince's presence with much ceremony by Buckingham. Charles was seated in a large tapestried hall, which served as a reception-chamber, and was surrounded at the moment by the Earl of Bristol, Sir Walter Aston (the ordinary ambassador to Madrid, and a man of considerable ability), young Harry Jermyn, Bristol's chief secretary, and Sir Richard Graham, Cottington, and Endymion Porter.

The prince had now abandoned his travelling attire, and wore the splendid court suit of white satin which he had procured in Paris. His head was covered with a broad-leaved Spanish hat, adorned with a diamond brooch and a white drooping plume. All his attendants were richly attired.

As the Conde-Duque, conducted by Buckingham and followed by Gondomar, drew near, Charles arose, and made a step towards him, with the evident design of preventing him from kneeling; but the minister would not be stayed, but threw himself at the prince's feet and kissed his hand, with every manifestation of reverence. When Charles at last raised him, and prayed him to be covered, he refused, though, as a grandee, he was entitled to wear his hat in the presence of his own sovereign. Gondomar paid a similar mark of respect to the prince, and remained uncovered.

"I am come," said Olivarez, in accents of the most profound respect, and with the most deferential demeanour, "in his majesty's name, to welcome your highness to Madrid. The visit was totally unexpected, but it is not the less gratifying on that account, and his majesty conceives himself placed under such deep obligation by the step taken by your highness that he can refuse you nothing."

"I hope I shall not ask more than he will be readily disposed to grant, my lord," replied Charles. "And yet it is in his majesty's power to confer the greatest possible favour upon me."

"Again I say, there is nothing your highness can ask that will be refused," replied Olivarez,

bowing. "I should very imperfectly express his majesty's sentiments if I did not say so."

"I trust I shall soon have an opportunity of thanking his majesty in person for his goodness," said Charles.

"His majesty desires to postpone the gratification of receiving your highness at the palace until arrangements can be made for your public entry into Madrid in a manner befitting your dignity. He would fain have visited you this morning, but my lord of Buckingham being opposed to that plan, the king relinquished the idea."

"Buckingham was right," said Charles. "I could not allow his majesty to visit me first."

"In this dilemma," said Olivarez, "his majesty proposes, if it meets with your highness's approval, that you shall drive in the Prado this evening, when he can have the opportunity he so eagerly desires of beholding you. He will come thither attended by the queen, the Infantes his brothers, and the Infanta."

"I entirely approve of the arrangement," remarked Charles. "But I trust his majesty will not allow the day to pass without affording me an opportunity of conversing with him and embracing him."

"Such, I am sure, is his majesty's intent, prince," replied Olivarez. "He is all impatience

to greet you. He means to demonstrate his satisfaction at your highness's arrival by a series of triumphs and entertainments such as have never been exhibited in this capital since his majesty came to the throne. In order that the nobility of the court may appear in greater splendour, an edict recently passed against excess in attire shall be suspended. A quarter in the palace, in all respects like that occupied by the king, shall be assigned to your highness and your suite. You shall be attended by as many officers as the king, and be served in the same manner as his majesty. None beneath the rank and quality of a noble shall wait upon you. My brother-in-law, the Conde de Monterey, governor of Italy, a member of the council of state, and a grandee, shall be your mayor-domo-mayor. The Conde de Gondomar and the Duke de Cea shall also serve you as mayor-domos. Members of the council of state shall daily attend upon you to ascertain your pleasure; and four grandees — namely, Don Juan Alfonso Euri-guez, Admiral of Castile, the Conde de Puebla, the Marquis de Velada, and the Duke de Yjar — shall be ever ready to accompany you when you desire to go abroad. A royal guard of archers shall likewise serve as your escort."

"His majesty is far too gracious to me," said Charles.

"In regard to your highness's entry into the palace," pursued Olivarez, "his majesty desires that the solemnity shall be performed with as much pomp and splendour as would be observed at the coronation of a king of Castile. In accordance with this plan, your highness will be brought from the convent of San Geronimo, whence our kings are wont to make their solemn entry into the city, and conducted by all the principal officers of state, all the chief nobles of the court, and all the public officers, to the palace."

"I lack words to express my gratitude," said Charles.

"Furthermore," pursued Olivarez, "in order that all classes of the community may participate in the joy felt by his majesty at your arrival, he will proclaim a general pardon to all offenders. All prisoners shall be set free."

"El Cortejo will have reason to thank your highness, if he is included in the pardon," remarked Buckingham.

"The royal signature will be given in blank to his highness," said Olivarez, "so that he can extend his grace to whomsoever he may please."

"I will not abuse the privilege," said Charles. "I pray your excellency to thank the king most heartily for his great goodness towards me."

"I have but imperfectly described his majesty's

intentions towards your highness," said Olivarez, "but I trust I have said enough to convince you of his earnest desire to please you. And now, having discharged my mission, I will take my leave of your highness."

So saying, the Conde-Duque withdrew with much ceremony.

V.

How Charles drove in the Prado, and how he saw the Infanta in the Chapel of the Recoletos Agustinos.

THOUGH naturally curious to behold the city, Charles did not stir forth during the day, but occupied himself in writing a long letter to his royal father, in which he acquainted him with his safe arrival in Madrid, and described his secret interview with the Infanta, as he felt sure the occurrence would amuse the king. This done, and despatched with another letter from Buckingham by a courier to England, the prince again strolled forth alone into the garden to indulge his meditations without interruption.

Later on, he dined in company with Buckingham and Gondomar. The Earl of Bristol waited upon him during the repast. Dinner over, he entered Gondomar's coach, and, attended by the conde, Buckingham, and Graham, drove to the Prado. The Earl of Bristol followed in his own

coach, in which were seated Sir Walter Aston, Cottington, and Endymion Porter.

As the carriage containing the prince traversed the Calle de Alcalá, on its way to the Prado, it passed the palace of the Conde-Duque de Olivarez, and Gondomar called Charles's attention to the magnificent edifice. In the court-yard, close to the grand entrance, stood the minister's superb coach, and near it was drawn up a mounted escort.

When the prince entered the Prado the drive was full of equipages, and the walks among the trees were crowded with richly-dressed caballeros and señoras. Nothing could be gayer than the scene. The evening was lovely, and seemed to have tempted forth the whole of the population of Madrid to this charming promenade.

But, besides the beauty of the evening, there was another motive which had brought out all this concourse to the Prado. Promulgated at the palace, the rumour had gone abroad, and was circulated with extraordinary rapidity throughout the city, that the Infanta's suitor, the Prince of Wales, had arrived, and would be seen in the Prado that evening. In consequence of this report, the Madrileños of all ranks flocked thither, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the illustrious stranger.

Nor were they disappointed. It soon became known that the prince was in the Conde de Gen-

domar's coach, and, as the equipage passed slowly along, all eyes were directed towards it, and Charles was readily distinguished. But the crowd were respectful and unobtrusive, and it being understood that the prince desired to remain incognito, they did not even attempt to cheer him. The noble physiognomy of the prince, his grave looks and dark complexion, delighted all beholders, and it was universally said that he looked like a Castilian. Buckingham likewise attracted great attention, but was not so much admired as the prince.

In the central part of the drive, occupying the space between the Calle de Alcala and the Calle de San Geronimo, there was a broad open space, surrounded by benches, and terminated at either end by a fountain. This spot, being resorted to by the best company, was known as the "Salon del Prado," a designation which it still retains. In the throng of caballeros careering round the ring, mounted on fiery jennets or beautiful Barbary horses, displaying their graces of horsemanship to the dark-eyed señoras seated on the benches or pacing to and fro on the walks, Charles beheld the chief gallants of the city. All that Madrid could produce in the way of splendour of equipage, of fashion and beauty, was to be seen at that moment in the Salon del Prado. There were stately hidalgos, richly-dressed cavaliers, and lovely dames, the latter, it

may be mentioned, being universally attired in black, and wearing no other covering to the head except the graceful and becoming mantilla.

But, though the bulk of the crowd was composed of the higher classes, the populace was not excluded from the "Salon," and mingling with the gayest groups might be seen priests, monks, manolos, gitanos, and gallegos. Mounted archers were stationed at various points, but, as we have said, the demeanour of the crowd was so orderly, that their presence was scarcely required.

Charles had driven as far as Nuestra Señora de Atocha, a convent founded by Charles V., and situated at the eastern extremity of the Prado, and had just returned to the "Salon," when a grand procession of carriages, preceded by a mounted escort, was observed to be descending the slope from the Calle de Alcalá. A hundred voices instantly called out, "The king! — the king!" And, on hearing these shouts, Gondomar at once ordered his coachman to halt.

Shortly afterwards the escort, which was proceeding at a foot's pace, rode by, and was followed by the king's carriage, the large windows of which being open, gave Charles a full view of the illustrious party inside it.

It was evident that Philip was anxiously looking out for the prince, and the moment he caught sight

of him he courteously raised his hat, while Charles returned the salutation with equal respect. Not a word, of course, passed between the royal personages, but Philip's speaking glances conveyed the welcome he designed to accord to the prince.

Not less eloquent were the looks of all the rest of the party in the carriage. The Infanta thought the prince could read her heart as he gazed at her, and blushed deeply. The young queen, Elizabeth of France, was enraptured, and as soon as the carriage passed by, she exclaimed, with a glance at the Infanta, "Oh! how handsome he is!"

"By Santiago! he has a noble countenance," cried Philip. "And, strange to say, he looks more like a Spaniard than an Englishman."

The meeting had been watched with great interest by those sufficiently near to observe it, and loud shouts were now raised for the king, but with the good taste which had hitherto marked their proceedings, the crowd still abstained from any direct allusion to the prince.

After the royal carriage came that of the Conde-Duque, and the countess was in ecstasies at the sight of the prince. Then followed a dozen superb carriages belonging to the highest nobility of the court. All these equipages were splendidly gilt and painted, and made a magnificent show.

The grand cortége took its way slowly towards

the Recoletos Agustinos, a monastery situated at the western extremity of the Prado, where the royal party designed to alight and pay their devotions, and Gondomar ordered his coachman to follow in the same direction.

Long before the prince's arrival, the royal family had entered the monastery. Charles nevertheless alighted, and was conducted to the chapel, where vespers were being solemnised. To this chapel only the royal family, and the nobles in immediate attendance upon the king, were admitted, but a word from Gondomar obtained instant entrance to Charles and his companions.

The scene that offered itself to Charles's gaze was striking. Within the chapel were congregated the first nobility of Spain, disposed in various groups. Before the altar knelt the young king, with the queen on his right, and the Infanta on the other side.

When Maria arose from prayer and looked round, the first object she beheld was her lover. A thrill of joy passed through her frame, for she construed his presence in the chapel as a step towards Romanism, and felt sure he would soon worship at the same altar as herself. With more zeal than before, she resumed her devotions, but when she looked round again, Charles was gone.

Before the royal party issued from the monastery

night had come on. But innumerable torches were lighted, and being borne by the side of the carriages on their return through the Prado, added greatly to the effect of the procession.

VI.

Of the Meeting between Charles and the King in the Prado.

ON the prince's return to the House of Seven Chimneys, he found Olivarez awaiting his arrival.

"The glimpse which his majesty has obtained of your highness," said the minister, "so far from satisfying him, has awakened in his breast such an eager desire for an interview, that he cannot wait till to-morrow, and he hopes, therefore, that you will agree to meet him at midnight in the Prado."

"I am equally impatient to meet his majesty," returned Charles. "In what part of the Prado shall I find him?"

"Near the fountain at the east end," said Olivarez. "I shall be in attendance. I have a further request to prefer to your highness. It is, that you will graciously allow me to take the Marquis of Buckingham with me, so that on this occasion he may attend upon his majesty."

"Take him by all means," said Charles. "In return, the Conde de Gondomar shall attend upon me. To-night, my lord," he added to Buckingham,

"you will consider yourself a Spaniard, and serve the king as faithfully as if you were his subject."

Thereupon, Olivarez and Buckingham quitted the room together.

A little before midnight, attended by Gondomar and the Earl of Bristol, Charles drove to the place of rendezvous appointed by the king. At that hour the Prado was almost deserted. An occasional coach, however, might be seen moving along slowly, while here and there a couple might be observed engaged in amorous converse.

The night was clear and starlight, and as Charles approached the fountain he perceived a coach drawn up near it. At a short distance from the carriage, pacing to and fro beneath the trees, could be seen a tall caballero, with his face muffled in his cloak, and a long rapier by his side. As soon as Gondomar caught sight of this personage, he said to Charles, "It is the king."

As the prince's coach stopped, the caballero became motionless, and waited till the prince drew near him. He then threw aside his cloak, and springing towards Charles, embraced him.

"My brother! I am delighted to meet you!" cried Philip.

"Sire, I am equally delighted to meet you," cried Charles.

For more than half an hour the two royal per-

sonages walked together among the trees, each with his arm round the other's neck, and both seemingly delighted at the meeting. Philip questioned Charles minutely as to his journey, and appeared greatly interested by all he heard. They also spoke of the Infanta, and Charles had every reason to believe that the king was quite as eager as himself for the speedy completion of the match.

So charmed were they with each other, that they were loth to separate. But when of necessity the interview came to an end, Philip begged permission to conduct the prince home. Charles with difficulty yielded, and it required some persuasion, and even a little gentle force on Philip's part, to induce the prince to get first into the carriage. "In doing this," he said, "I feel I am disobeying the king my father."

During the drive home Charles sat on the king's right, and although Olivarez and Buckingham were now present, their discourse was as friendly and as free from restraint as it had previously been. The king was very earnest with Olivarez to expedite as much as possible the preparations for the prince's public entry into the city and reception at the palace, and the Conde-Duque promised compliance.

By this time the carriage having arrived at the House of Seven Chimneys, the royal pair separated with every expression of regard.

VII.

Of the Presents sent to Charles by the King.

Thus far everything had gone well. Any misgivings that Charles entertained were banished from his breast, and gave place to joyful confidence. Unless some wholly unforeseen difficulty arose, it seemed impossible there could now be any serious impediment to the speedy completion of the treaty. Buckingham was quite as sanguine as the prince, and even Bristol, though he had so much experience of Spanish dissimulation, began to think that Olivarez meant to act fairly. Full of joyful anticipations of the future, Charles retired to rest.

Next morning, when Graham entered his chamber, and at the prince's request threw open the casement, the white dove, which had been perched on the window-sill since dawn, flew into the room, and alighted near the couch — so near, that Charles could have touched the beautiful bird if he had extended his hand. There it remained so long as the prince continued in the room.

On descending to the lower room Charles was informed that two large chests had just arrived from the palace, containing sumptuous apparel, and fine linen for himself and his attendants. Other presents were also sent by the king in the course of the day.

Among the few nobles who were presented that day to Charles by the Earl of Bristol was the Conde de Monterey, who, after kneeling and kissing the prince's hand, said,

"I have to inform your highness that it has just been decided by the king and the council of state that your public entrance into the city shall take place at the earliest moment possible, his majesty being naturally anxious to have you as his guest in the palace. The ceremonial has, therefore, been fixed for the day after to-morrow, and will be conducted with the utmost splendour. On these occasions it is customary for the kings and princes of Spain to make their entrance into the city on horseback. Trusting, therefore, that your highness will deign to conform to the arrangement, his majesty has sent by me two white Arabs of the purest race, one of which he prays you to select for your own use on the occasion — the other he himself will ride."

"I will try them both, my lord," replied Charles, courteously, "and that which I deem the least excellent I will retain, leaving the other to the king. I pray you to convey my heartfelt thanks to his majesty for the truly royal gifts he has lavished upon me. I accept them as an evidence of his good will."

"I will deliver your highness's message," said

Monterey, bowing profoundly. "Before I depart, let me entreat your highness to command my services in whatsoever way you may think proper. And, in making this offer, let me add that I speak not for myself, but for the whole court. All are equally devoted to your highness — all eager to serve you."

With another profound salutation, he then withdrew.

Charles's next visitor was the Duke de Cea, who had just arrived, and flew to pay his respects to the prince.

Charles received the young duke with great cordiality, and diverted him by relating what had happened to the two barbs. De Cea remarked that he had heard of El Cortejo as he crossed the Somosierra, but had not been molested by the robber-chief. After some further discourse, Charles withdrew with Bristol, leaving De Cea and Graham alone together.

"I have news that will delight you, my dear friend," said the young duke. "I left Doña Casilda and her father at Fuencarrel. They will come on to Madrid this evening, and to-morrow you can present yourself at the casa of the conde. But I cannot conceal from you that he *has* promised his daughter to Don Christobal. Do not, however, be discouraged.

Doña Casilda prefers you to your rival. She owned as much to her sister, Doña Flor."

"You transport me with delight by what you tell me," cried Graham. "But where is Doña Flor?"

"She is with her father and sister, and will arrive with them this evening. Don Pompeo joined them at Fuencarrel, and it was to avoid meeting him that I came on to Madrid. It seems that his suspicions have been aroused in regard to me, and I shall have to be doubly on my guard in future, for were he to make any discovery, his vengeance would know no bounds."

"For Doña Flor's sake, I think you ought to give up the affair," observed Graham.

"Impossible! I love her too well," said the young duke. "No, I must go on, be the risk what it may. But enough of this. I am curious to hear all that has happened to the prince since his arrival in Madrid."

Graham then entered into details, and described the prince's secret interview with the Infanta, with which De Cea was vastly amused.

"The stratagem does great credit to Gondomar," he said, with a laugh, "and was admirably carried out. I hope this will not be the only secret interview the prince will have with his mistress. When he takes up his abode in the palace other opportuni-

ties will occur. And as it appears that I am fortunate enough to be appointed one of his highness's lords in waiting, I shall be able to serve him in this respect."

Their conversation was here interrupted by the return of Charles and Bristol, and shortly afterwards Buckingham entered with Olivarez. The Conde-Duque came charged with the most cordial greetings of his royal master, who declared that he could not pass the day without beholding the prince, and therefore entreated his highness to pay him a private visit that evening in the palace.

To this Charles assented, all the more readily because he hoped to see the Infanta. But in that expectation he was disappointed.

Conveyed to the palace by Olivarez, he was met at the foot of a private staircase by his majesty, who was impatiently awaiting his arrival, and who led him to the garden, where they had an hour's conversation together.

At the close of the interview, the king attended Charles to his carriage, and when the prince had entered it his majesty leaped in, and insisted on accompanying him home.

VIII.

How the Prince went to the Convent of San Geronimo.

AT length the day arrived which had been appointed for the prince's public entrance into the city.

A little before noon, Charles and his attendants were assembled in the reception-chamber. The prince was attired in white satin, embroidered with gold. From his neck, sustained by a broad blue riband, hung the George, and beneath his knee he wore the enamelled Garter. All his attendants were attired in the sumptuous apparel sent by the King of Spain, and Buckingham's magnificent person was displayed to the greatest advantage in a doublet of orange-coloured satin, embroidered with leaves of silver, with a mantle to match. His cap was of black silk, enriched with pearls, and adorned with orange-coloured plumes.

Shortly afterwards four grandees were ushered in, all of whom were splendidly attired in cloths of gold and silver for the ceremonial. These were the Marquis de Montes Claros, Don Fernando Giron, the Conde de Gondomar, and the Duke de Cea. After making profound reverences to the prince, they informed him that, in pursuance of the king's orders, they were come to conduct his highness to the convent of San Geronimo.

Thanking them for their courtesy, Charles said he was ready to attend them. Whereupon, with as much ceremony as they could have shown to their own sovereign, they conducted him to a royal carriage which awaited him at the door of the mansion. Beside this superb equipage, which had half a dozen magnificently-caparisoned horses attached to it, there were two other coaches, and a detachment of mounted archers, in their full equipments, were drawn up, to act as an escort to the cortége.

Charles having entered the coach, Buckingham took a seat on his left, while Gondomar and De Cea sat opposite to them, with their backs to the horses. The next carriage was occupied by the Earl of Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, and the two grandees, and the third by the rest of Charles's attendants.

The cavalcade then got into motion, and made its way to the Calle de Alcalá, which was crowded with people in their holiday attire. On beholding the carriage containing Charles, the throng called out lustily, "Viva el Principe de Galles!" Charles bowed repeatedly in acknowledgment of these demonstrations.

The royal convent of San Geronimo, whither the prince was now proceeding, was a large monastic establishment, picturesquely situated on the rising ground on the north side of the Prado, in the midst of the wood. From this convent it

was customary for the kings of Castile to make a public entry into the city on the occasion of their coronation, and no greater honour could have been shown to Charles by the Spanish nation than to treat him as one of their own kings.

At the gate of the convent stood the lord prior, ready to receive the prince as he alighted, and all the brethren who were assembled in the hall bowed reverently as Charles passed through it. Having ceremoniously conducted his illustrious guest to the royal apartments, the lord prior left him, and proceeded with the brethren to the chapel, where mass was performed.

Breakfast was then served for Charles and his attendants, and the prince was waited upon by the grandees precisely as Philip himself would have been served.

When the repast was concluded, Charles repaired to the audience-chamber, where a chair of state had been prepared for him, on which he took his seat — the Spanish grandees standing on his right hand, and Buckingham and Bristol on the left. The prince had now to give audience to various important personages, in the same manner as the king. The first to be introduced was the Inquisitor General — a tall, dark man, who seemed well fitted by his looks for the office he held. Nevertheless, he bent reverently before the here-

tical prince, and respectfully kissed his highness's hands.

As the Inquisidor General moved on and took his place near the grandees, he was succeeded by the members of the Council-Royal of Castile, all of whom knelt before the prince, those nearest him kissing his hand. Then came the Council-Royal of Aragon; then the Council of Portugal; and after them the Council of Italy, the Council of Military Orders, the Council of the Indies, the Council of the Treasury, and the Council of the Exchequer. Lastly, came Don Juan de Castilla, the Corregidor of Madrid, and Don Lorenzo Olivarez, Don Pedro de Torres, and Don Christobal de Medina, the three principal Regidores. All these important officers knelt before the prince, and after kissing his hand, drew up on either side of the chair of state.

Just as the ceremonial was completed, loud fanfares of trumpets were heard without, and the usher announced that the king and his two royal brothers had arrived at the convent.

On this intelligence Charles immediately arose, and followed by the grandees, together with Buckingham and Bristol, proceeded to the gate of the convent, where he found Philip, who had just alighted with the two Infantes. On seeing Charles,

the king flew towards him, and affectionately embraced him.

The two young princes next embraced Charles, after which the royal party returned to the audience-chamber. Here the king and his brothers stood on one side, while all the grandees, nobles, and gentlemen who had attended his majesty, passed before Charles, and kissed his hand.

This done, trumpets were sounded, and a herald came forward, proclaiming that, in honour of the visit of the Prince of Wales, a general pardon would be granted by his majesty to all offenders. With a profound obeisance to the prince, the herald then went forth to make the proclamation in different parts of the city.

On his departure, the heads of each of the councils advanced towards the prince, and, when they had stationed themselves before him, Philip, who was standing beside Charles, spoke thus:

“Desiring to show all honour to the illustrious Prince of Wales, who is now our guest, we enjoy you, our faithful councillors, and all magistrates and public officers, to do no favour and bestow no office, without his highness’s direction, during his abode with us.”

“Your majesty’s commands shall be obeyed,” replied the chief of the Council of Castile, speaking for the rest.

The whole assemblage then shouted, as with one voice, "Viva el Principe de Galles!"


Bowing graciously around, in token of his satisfaction, Philip next took the hand of Charles, and led him to the room in which he had breakfasted. They were followed by the two young princes. While the royal party tarried in this inner room, cates and conserves, with sweet wines of Malaga and Alicante, were served to them by the monks.

IX.

Of the Prince's Public Entry into Madrid.

MEANTIME, the procession had set forth from the convent. At its head rode a band of trumpets and clarions, drums, kettle-drums, cymbals, and fifes, making the air resound with martial strains. The musicians wore cassocks of carnation satin guarded with silver lace, and having black borders cut upon silver tinsel. Their caps were of black velvet adorned with black and carnation plumes. They were all well mounted, and had the royal arms embroidered on the housings of their horses, banners, and pennons.

Next came four trumpeters belonging to the city of Madrid, clad in cassocks of orange-coloured taffata laid with silver lace, and wearing black hats adorned with plumes of the same hue as their cassocks.



They were followed by a great host of lacqueys habited in similar liveries, each armed with sword and dagger, and carrying a white buckler.

Next came the three Regidores riding together, and the Corregidor riding by himself.

After them came four trumpeters belonging to Don Juan Alfonso Euriguez, Admiral of Castile, in long coats of black satin guarded with gold lace, with the admiral's arms on their breasts, and wearing black hats with yellow and white plumes.

The admiral, who was mounted on a richly-trapped charger, and bore a silver staff, was preceded by fifty lacqueys, wearing doublets of black satin, cloaks fringed with gold, white shoes, and black hats with orange and white plumes.

Then came four trumpeters belonging to Don Pedro de Toledo-Osorio, Marquis of Villa Franca, wearing gaberlines of yellow satin laid with gold lace, with the arms of the house of Toledo woven on their breasts and shoulders. Their hats were of black taffeta, with bands of gold and white plumes.

Don Pedro was preceded by thirty mounted lacqueys in doublets laid with gold lace, with sleeves of tinsel, and hats embroidered with little windmills of gold, and adorned with white plumes and tucks of silver.

Next came four trumpeters belonging to the

Conde de Monterey, with cassocks of white satin, laced and flowered with gold, hats of white satin with black plumes, and having the conde's arms embroidered on their bandrols.

De Monterey was preceded by a hundred lacqueys, mounted on horses trapped with white and gold, being the colours of the Prince of Wales, and habited in white satin, adorned with leaves of gold, and wearing black hats with black and white plumes.

Next came the trumpeters of the Duke de Cea, in cassocks of blue satin laid with silver, black hats with blue plumes, and having the duke's arms on their trumpets. Before the duke rode fifty lacqueys, mounted on noble chargers, with trappings of velvet adorned with pearls, and having pouncings of gold, silver, and pomegranates. These lacqueys bore white targets with white bandels, and were attired in blue satin covered with silver lace. Their hats were of black satin, with bands of silver and blue plumes.

Next came the trumpeters of Don Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, Duke de Infantado, one of the proudest of the Castilian nobles. These men wore white frizado mantles, with gaberdines of black damask edged with silver lace, with the arms of Mendoza on their shoulders and breasts, as well as on the bandrols of their clarions. Before the old duke

rode fifty lacqueys in doublets and hose of black satin, guarded with broad silver lace, and black velvet hats with bands and wreaths of silver, and black and white plumes. Behind him rode fifty grooms in crimson taffeta. The horses were trapped in black and white.

After these followed the trumpeters and lacqueys of Don Diego Lopez de Zuniga, General of the Coast of Granada. Next those of Don Fernando Giron. Then those of the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo; those of the Castellan of the Cordovas; of the Marquis del Carpio; of the Conde de Saldana, Don Christobal de Gavina, the Conde de Gondomar, and a multitude of others.

The grandees vied with each other in splendour of habiliments and number of attendants.

After the nobles and their attendants had ridden on, there came a dozen trumpeters in carnation satin, with the royal arms woven in gold on their bandrols. They were followed by the king's equerry, his majesty's riders, the royal pages and officers.

Then followed a hundred gentlemen of the royal household, each mounted on a goodly charger, trapped in black and white, with silver musrols, and coverings of crimson velvet, fringed with gold thread. On these cloths were embroidered the king's name, Felipe IV., with the royal blazon.

Holding the bridle of each horse was a footman

in a doublet of carnation satin, laid with silver and black lace, with mantles of cloth of silver. Their hats were black, with silver bands and carnation and black plumes. Then followed the mayor-domos, and after them came the king and the Prince of Wales riding side by side, Charles being placed on his majesty's right hand. Both presented a most majestic appearance — both were perfect horsemen, so that it was impossible to say to whom the palm of superior grace ought to be assigned. Philip was attired in black taffeta richly guarded. His girdle glittered with diamonds, and his black velvet hat, which was surmounted by tall white plumes, was ornamented with priceless jewels. Round his neck was a massive chain of gold, ornamented with green and black emeralds, and representing four crowns linked together. He also wore the orders of the Toison d'Or and Calatrava, and on his mantle was embroidered the red cross of Santiago. The trappings and furniture of the two noble steeds were exactly alike. The manes and tails of the animals were plaited with gold, the bridles and saddles were of red morocco leather embroidered with magnificent pearls, covered with the finest lambskins, and the housings were of crimson velvet, garnished and guarded with gold lace.

Behind the two royal personages, mounted on chargers trapped in crimson velvet, embroidered with

gold, and adorned with their arms, rode Olivarez and Buckingham, side by side like Philip and Charles — and apparently, from their looks and gestures, the best friends in the world. On this occasion the two favourites acted as masters of the horse to their respective rulers, and each was accompanied by a richly-caparisoned charger, led by a couple of grooms, as a symbol of his office.

Buckingham's habiliments have been already described. Those of Olivarez were of black satin embroidered with gold, and cut upon silver tinsel, and the haughty minister wore a black hat glittering with diamonds, and adorned with black plumes striped with gold.

A crowd of richly-attired pages followed. Then came the Earl of Bristol and Sir Walter Aston, followed by Charles's three attendants, Graham, Cottington, and Endymion Porter, all of whom made a gallant show. The rear of the long and magnificent cortége was brought up by a detachment of the Almayn guard, under the command of the Conde de Barrajas.

The setting forth of Philip and Charles from the Convent of San Geronimo was announced by a peal of ordnance, and thereupon all the bells of the city began to ring joyously. Thousands of persons were collected in the Prado to witness the procession, and their continuous shouts rent the air. When Philip and Charles came in sight, these acclamations were redoubled.

After traversing the Salon del Prado, the cortége proceeded to the Calle de Alcalá, and as the king and the prince approached the street, four-and-twenty regidores of the city, gorgeously arrayed in cloth of tissue, met them, bearing a superb canopy, which they held over the king and his guest during their progress through the city. We may mention that this superb canopy was afterwards presented by the regidores to Buckingham.

From the court-yard of the palace of the Conde-Duque three hundred gentlemen in the minister's livery, and bearing his arms, and all well mounted, came forth to join the procession. They were under the command of Don Luis de Haro, son of the Marquis del Carpio, and nephew of the Conde-Duque.

As may be supposed, the Calle de Alcalá was densely crowded, but a road was preserved for the cavalcade by mounted archers and arquebusiers. In the widest part of the street, beyond the palace of the Conde-Duque, large scaffolds were erected, covered with rich cloths and tapestry, and these were now occupied by the various councils and important functionaries who had just been to pay homage to the prince.

All the habitations were decorated with costly stuffs, cloths of gold and silver, carpets and hangings, and, in some cases, pictures were hung out. The balconies and windows were filled with fair spectators, who waved their kerchiefs as the king

and prince passed by. Not even at Philip's coronation had so much enthusiasm been displayed. Poems were improvised in the prince's honour, and the following refrain to a song, composed for the occasion by the famous Lope de Vega, was everywhere chanted:

Carlos Estuardo soy,
Que, siendo amor mi guía,
Al cielo de España voy
Por ver my estrella María.

Charles Stuart was indeed the hero of the hour. The story of his romantic expedition had been everywhere recounted, and had roused the strongest sympathies of a generous and impulsive people. The prince's distinguished appearance and majestic deportment more than realised the notions that had been formed of him, and all tongues were loud in his praise. Moreover, it had been artfully insinuated by the priesthood, at the instigation of Olivarez, that not only had Charles come to claim the Infanta, but that he intended to recant his heresies and embrace the faith of Rome, and this fiction being firmly believed by the populace, there was no drawback to the general rejoicing.

At the Puerta del Sol a stage was erected, on which was performed a ballet, introducing the best national dances. The fountain in the midst of the plaza ran with wine, and all the houses in the Calle Mayor were as richly adorned as those in the Calle de Alcalá.

As he entered the grand plaza in front of the Palacio Real, a magnificent spectacle was offered to the prince. The whole of the cavalcade was here drawn up, and was surrounded by the royal guard in their full accoutrements. The clangour of the trumpet, the clash of the cymbal, the thunder of the kettle-drum, and the shrill notes of the fife, were heard from the band which was stationed near the principal gate of the palace. Towards this gate, which we have already mentioned retained its original Moorish character, Philip and Charles now proceeded amid the deafening acclamations of the spectators.

At the gate they were met by Don Luis de Paredes, alcaide of the palace, with a number of gentlemen of the household, and were ceremoniously conducted to the grand portal, where the king and his royal guest alighted. Fain would Charles have taken the hindmost place, but this Philip would not permit, and the point of etiquette was at last adjusted, as it had been before, by their walking side by side, each with an arm on the other's shoulder. In this fraternal fashion, which excited the admiration of all who beheld them, and preceded by the Conde de Puebla and the Conde de Benavente, mayor-domos, they repaired to her majesty's quarter.

They found the queen in a large and splendidly furnished apartment, at the upper end of which was

a canopy of gold tissue adorned with the arms of Castile and Aragon. On either side of the canopy were ranged the queen's meninos and meninas, habited in rose-coloured satin, and beneath it were placed gilt chairs, covered with crimson velvet, on which the queen and the Infanta were seated, but on the entrance of Charles with the king, the two royal ladies at once arose and advanced to meet him.

Her majesty was splendidly arrayed in a robe of cloth of silver, and literally blazed with diamonds. The Infanta was far more simply attired in white satin, and her sole ornaments were pearls. She blushed deeply as she returned Charles's profound salutation, and when addressed by him she trembled and manifested considerable agitation. The prince augured well from this display of feeling. The royal party next proceeded to the canopy, where Charles was placed between the queen and the Infanta, and where they all remained for some time in conversation. But in spite of his efforts, Charles failed to draw the Infanta into discourse. She listened with evident interest to what he said, and sometimes smiled, but silence seemed imposed upon her by the frigid rules of Spanish etiquette. On the other hand, the queen was extremely lively.

Half an hour was spent in this way, and at the expiration of that time his majesty proposed to conduct the prince to his quarter of the palace.

As Charles withdrew, the queen and the Infanta accompanied him to the door.

A magnificent suite of apartments, equal in extent to those occupied by his majesty, had been assigned to the prince. They were situated in that part of the palace which enjoyed the finest view, and overlooked the gardens and the valley of the Manzanares. At the back was a patio surrounded by marble arcades, and filled with orange-trees. When the king and the prince entered the noble gallery belonging to the apartments in question, they were met by the Conde de Monterey, who had been appointed the prince's mayor-domo-mayor, and the Conde de Gondomar and the Duke de Cea, his highness's mayor-domos, and were ceremoniously ushered into a grand reception-chamber, where they found the Conde-Duque de Olivarez, the Duque de Infantado, the Admiral of Castile, the Marquis del Castel Rodrigo, and all the first grandees of Spain. With them were the Marquis of Buckingham, the Earl of Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, Graham, and the rest of Charles's attendants.

The grandees raised their hats to Charles, but immediately replaced them.

While the royal pair were still standing together, the Conde de Monterey delivered two gold keys to his majesty, who took them, and, presenting them to Charles, said:

"These keys will open all the doors of the palace to you. Your highness will bestow them as you deem meet."

Returning suitable thanks, Charles immediately gave one key to Buckingham, and the other to Bristol.

Shortly afterwards, the large doors at the upper end of the chamber were thrown open, and an usher announced that the banquet was served.

Amid flourishes of trumpets, and marshalled by the Conde de Monterey and the two other mayordomos, Philip and Charles, walking side by side, passed into the banqueting-chamber, where a grand repast awaited them.

At the upper end of the long table, on which was a gorgeous display of gold plate, was a dais, with a canopy above it emblazoned with the arms of England. Here seats were placed for Philip and Charles, who were waited upon by Gondomar and De Cea.

At the close of the banquet, the king and prince, with all the court, drove forth to witness the rejoicings that were taking place in the city. When night came on, all the houses were illuminated, and immense bonfires were lighted in the public places. At midnight, a grand display of fireworks took place in the Salon del Prado.

With shouts of welcome ringing in his ears, Charles returned to his apartments in the Palacio Real.

BOOK IV.

FIESTAS REALES.

The Spanish Match. II.

5

I.

How Charles passed his time at the Palace.

FOR more than a fortnight Charles had now occupied the magnificent suite of apartments assigned him by the king in the royal palace. He was treated with as much state and ceremony as Philip himself, served by grandees, consulted by the heads of the different councils and other officials, attended by a princely retinue of servants, and escorted by a guard of mounted archers whenever he stirred abroad. During all this time the royal festivities had continued, and splendid entertainments were given, at which the whole court assisted. Rejoicings were also held throughout the city, and bonfires blazed nightly in all the public places.

Nothing was talked about but the approaching royal marriage, and it was universally believed that the ceremonial was only delayed until the prince had publicly abjured his heresies, and conformed to the faith of Rome. The latter opinion was somewhat shaken by the arrival of two English chaplains, Doctors Man and Wren. These Protestant divines were regarded with so much dislike at the palace, that they were compelled to take up their abode

with the Earl of Bristol at the House of Seven Chimneys.

By this time so many English nobles and persons of distinction had arrived in Madrid, that Charles was able to keep up a court of his own at the palace, and his ante-chamber was daily crowded. Among the first to join the prince were the Earl of Carlisle, with the Lords Mountjoy and Kensington, each of whom brought with him a retinue of servants and a supply of horses. The next to arrive were Lord Andover and Sir Robert Carr, gentlemen of the bed-chamber to the prince. Next came Lord Vaughan, the prince's comptroller, and with him Archie, the court fool, who had claimed fulfilment of James's promise to allow him to visit Madrid. Then came Lords Hay, Rochford, and Montague, with Sir George Goring, Sir Thomas Jermyn, Sir John Wentworth, and many others, bringing with them rich habiliments, tilting furniture, horses, jewels, and other ornaments for the prince and Buckingham, who were thus enabled to make a display befitting their dignity.

Buckingham also was gratified in an especial manner. A patent, by which he was created Earl of Coventry and Duke of Buckingham, was sent him by his royal master. Sir Francis Steward, the bearer of the patent, also brought with him the insignia of the Garter for the newly-made duke,

together with the gorgeous robes of the Order, to be worn by the prince and Buckingham on Saint George's Day.

"I send you also," wrote James to his two bairns, "the robes of the Order, which you must not forget to wear on Saint George's Day, and dine together in them, if they come in time, which I pray God they may, for it will be a goodly sight for the Spaniards to see my two boys dine in them."

The accession of rank which he had thus acquired was especially gratifying to Buckingham, as it placed him on a level with Olivarez. But his arrogance was greatly increased, and became almost insufferable. Though Olivarez unquestionably exercised as much influence over Philip as Buckingham did over Charles, the haughty minister treated his royal master with every outward show of respect. Not so Buckingham, who even ventured to seat himself in the prince's presence — an unpardonable breach of etiquette in the opinion of the grandees, who could not understand how the prince tolerated such familiarity. Nothing but consideration for Charles prevented many of them, provoked almost beyond endurance by the favourite's insolence, from coming to an open rupture with him. Buckingham, however, seemed utterly indifferent to their opinion, regarding the Spaniards with ill-disguised scorn, and

treating them with unbecoming levity. In the midst of a grave discussion he would break off suddenly with the snatch of a song, as if to manifest the little impression produced upon him by the conference; or, snapping his fingers like castanets, would amuse himself by practising a bolero or a seguidilla. After a time, the only influential person in the Spanish cabinet who remained constant to him was the Conde de Gondomar.

Digby's grave and courteous manners were favourably contrasted with those of Buckingham, and general regret was expressed that the prince did not prefer him to the capricious, frivolous, and overbearing favourite. In the hope of lowering Bristol in the esteem of the Spanish cabinet and court, Buckingham lost no opportunity of slighting him; but he did not succeed in his design, and had the mortification of discovering that the discreet ambassador was preferred to himself by the king and his minister.

This dissension between Buckingham and his colleague was singularly unfortunate for Charles, as it rendered unanimity in his councils impossible; any proposition made by Bristol, however judicious, being opposed by Buckingham. Hence constant difficulties were created.

But while Buckingham was raising up against himself a host of enemies, and the English nobles,

aping his manner, were rendering themselves obnoxious to the Spaniards by their insolence, Charles lost none of his popularity. His gracious manner and dignified deportment delighted all who approached him; and so friendly was the intercourse between him and the king, that Philip began to feel a real affection for his expected brother-in-law. The two exalted personages rode forth frequently together, and amused themselves with hawking on the plains in the valley of the Manzanares, or in chasing the wild-boar, the wolf, and the fox, in the woods of a royal domain called El Pardo, about three or four leagues from Madrid.

But though Charles had every reason to be satisfied, with the attention shown him by the king, he was wofully disappointed in the main object of his visit. His suit with the Infanta made little or no progress. He saw her daily, it is true, either at some grand entertainment in the palace, or in the royal carriage when she drove in the Prado; but he found it impossible to obtain any private discourse with her. Her manner towards him was so constrained and formal that he was almost driven to despair. De Cea had undertaken to obtain him a private interview with her, but since the prince's arrival at the palace she had been so closely watched, that hitherto the young duke had failed in the attempt.

So annoyed was Charles by the treatment he experienced, that one day he remonstrated on the subject with the king.

"I fear my visit will be in vain, sire," he said. "I cannot flatter myself that I make the slightest progress in your sister's good graces. I know not how to express myself otherwise than by saying that she surrounds herself with an icy atmosphere that chills me as I approach. As her accepted suitor, methinks I ought to be allowed somewhat greater freedom."

"I admit the justice of your complaint, prince," said Philip, "but it is not in my power to relax in the slightest degree the forms prescribed by etiquette in regard to my sister. But rest assured, though her manner is necessarily cold and formal, in reality she is strongly attached to you."

"I should feel perfectly easy if I could have such an assurance from her own lips, sire," remarked Charles.

"It is impossible she can so satisfy you until after the espousals, when her position will be altered," said Philip. "Meantime, I am aware of her sentiments, and can speak for her."

Charles made no reply, but said to himself, "I will see her at all hazards."

II.

Madrid from the *Montaña del Principe Pio*.

ON the morning after the conversation just recorded took place between the king and the prince, at an early hour three persons of noble mien ascended the path leading to the summit of the *Montaña del Principe Pio*, a hill situated at the north-west side of Madrid.

Apparently their object was to obtain a view of the city, which the eminence in question afforded, for as soon as they had selected an advantageous position, they stood still and gazed around, carefully noting the various objects that came under their observation.

On the brow of the hill, immediately in their rear, and completely commanding the city with its ordnance, was a strong square fort surrounded by ramparts. From a standard planted on the highest point of this redoubt the royal banner floated in the morning breeze, while armed men paced to and fro on the walls.

We have already mentioned that it was not until Philip II. fixed his residence in Madrid that it became the capital of Spain, and it was chiefly during his reign and that of his son, Philip III., that the city had been extended and embellished. Hence, if at the period of our history Madrid could boast

of little antiquity, it had other merits in the eyes of the persons who now regarded it. Well built, laid out with a certain regularity, it had several broad and handsome streets, many noble plazas adorned with fountains and statues, a large park, and royal gardens, to which the public had access. The architecture of its habitations, if not picturesque, had an imposing character, and many of the palaces of the nobility were of vast size and very stately appearance.

From the Montaña del Principe Pio, which was only separated by a valley from the palace, an admirable view of that truly regal structure was obtained. Indeed, from no other spot could it be seen to so much advantage. From the same heights, also, the royal gardens were discernible, as well as the Casa del Campo, a delightful country residence belonging to the king on the farther side of the shallow Manzanares.

The attention, however, of the three persons was chiefly engrossed by the city. After counting the gates, commencing with the Puerta de Segovia, which was a little to the south of the palace, passing on to the Puerta de Toledo, and thence to the Puerta de Atocha, they followed the Prado till they came to the Puerta de Alcalá, and completed their survey with the Puerta de Bilbao. All the more prominent features of the city were thus

brought before them, and they were enabled to form an accurate notion of its general appearance and extent.

One of the party, who acted as cicerone to the others, next pointed out the principal streets — the Calle de Alcalá and the Calle Mayor, which traversed the city from east to west, running from the Prado to the royal palace — the Calle de Atocha, the Calle de Geronimo, and the Calle de Toledo. Having traced the streets, they turned to the plazas, and readily distinguished those of San Joachim, La Cevada, and San Domingo, the Puerta del Sol, and the Plaza Mayor. The churches and convents next claimed attention, and the guide pointed out San Domingo el Real, founded in the thirteenth century; Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion, built at the close of the fifteenth century; the monastery of the Descalzas Reales, founded by Juana, daughter of Charles V.; La Encarnacion, built some years previously by Margaret of Austria, mother of Philip IV.; and several others — none of them, however, with much pretension to architectural beauty. From streets, plazas, churches, and public buildings, the guide came to private mansions, and while pointing out the residences of the chief nobility, indicated the abode of Don Pompeo de Tansis in the Calle Ancha de San Bernardo, the Casa Saldana, and, lastly, the House of Seven Chimneys.

Their survey of the city completed, the party suffered their gaze to stray over its environs. In the bare and tawny plain in which Madrid is situated there is little on which the eye can rest with pleasure — no green pastures, no woods, nothing but a vast tract of stony country, dreary and desolate almost as a wilderness. There was scarcely any water in the channel of the Manzanares — the only river to be seen in the neighbourhood. An impressive aspect, however, was given to the vast stony plains by the ranges of lofty snow-clad mountains by which they were bounded; and though these mountainous chains — the Somosierra and the Guadarrama — were many leagues off, the atmosphere was so clear that the rifts on their sides and their jagged peaks could be clearly distinguished. Moreover, amid this stony waste there were a few green spots. A forest could here and there be seen, with a hunting-seat attached to it. These forests formed part of the royal domains, and abounded with wild-boar and deer. El Pardo Zarsuela, to which the king often resorted to recreate himself with the chase, was pointed out by the cicerone, who also showed his companions another beautiful country-seat belonging to Philip, called La Florida. Lastly, he directed their attention to the king's favourite retreat, El Buen Retiro, situated at the east side of the Prado, and renowned for its delightful gardens.

Upwards of an hour having been spent in this survey of the city and its environs, the person who had acted as cicerone on the occasion, and who was no other than the Conde de Gondomar, said to the chief of his companions:

"Is there anything further I can show your highness?"

"No, I am quite satisfied," replied Charles. "I have now got as perfect a notion of Madrid as if I had dwelt all my life in the city."

"What think you of the city, my lord duke?" inquired Gondomar, turning to the other.

"I like it better than I did at first," returned Buckingham. "But I hope I shall not offend you, count, if I confess that I am a little disappointed."

"Offend me! not in the least," replied Gondomar, smiling. "I can bear to hear Madrid abused without feeling my self-love hurt. Nay, I am so much of an Englishman, that I prefer London. Still, I think it a fine city."

"So it is," cried Charles, "a very fine city. Those lofty mountains, with their snowy peaks — even the bare plains by which it is surrounded — add greatly to its effect. If it has no monuments of antiquity — no picturesque structures replete with historical associations — it has at least broad streets, spacious plazas, and noble habitations. Above all, it has a magnificent palace."

"To say nothing of a river without water," remarked Buckingham. "I see the bed of the Manzanares, but can discern no stream."

"The channel is dry now," said Gondomar. "But at times it contains a torrent. If your highness is satisfied, we will proceed to the Casa del Campo. It is about the hour when the Infanta will go there."

"Is it not too early as yet?" remarked Charles.

"The princess rises betimes," returned Gondomar, "and the morning is so fine that it is certain to tempt her forth. I will engage you shall see her."

"Nay then, let us not tarry a moment longer," cried Charles.

III

La Casa del Campo.

THE party then hastily descended the hill, and proceeded along a road skirting the walls of the royal gardens, laid out on the ancient Campo del Moro. This road brought them to a handsome stone bridge across the Manzanares, or rather across the almost dry bed of that generally insignificant stream. Opposite them, on the farther bank of the river, was the Casa del Campo, a small palace belonging to the king, the chief attraction of which was its charming garden.

To this delightful retreat the Infanta frequently repaired in the early morning, when she was likely to be unobserved. Just as Charles and his attendants had crossed the bridge, two royal carriages were seen approaching, and the prince, whose beating heart informed him that his mistress was at hand, stepped out of the road to allow them to pass.

As he had anticipated, the first carriage contained the princess. She was attended by Doña Elvira and the old Duke del Infantado. As Charles caught her eye, she at once recognised him, and uttered a cry of delight and surprise, but her vivacity was quickly checked by the severe looks of Doña Elvira.

"It is the prince!" exclaimed Maria.

"The prince!" echoed the old duke, in surprise, and with a look of displeasure. "What is he doing abroad at this hour? You did not expect to behold him, princess?"

"Certainly not," she replied.

"He cannot be admitted to the casa while you are there, princess," said Doña Elvira. "I will not allow any meeting between you."

"The prince has no such design, I am quite sure," said the Infanta.

"I hope not," rejoined Doña Elvira, severely. "But I shall take measures to prevent it."

"Quite right, señora," remarked the old duke, approvingly.

By this time the carriage had reached the casa, and was driven into the court-yard, where the princess and the two persons with her alighted. The second coach contained four meninas, who likewise alighted and followed the princess into the palace. Doña Elvira's first order was that the outer gates should be immediately closed, and no one, of whatever rank, or under any pretext, admitted during the stay of the Lady Infanta.

"These precautions are quite unnecessary," said the Infanta, scarcely able to conceal her vexation; "but I suppose you feel bound to take them."

"His majesty would blame me if anything occurred," replied Doña Elvira.

"You cannot be too particular, señora," said the duke.

The Infanta made no remark, but passing through the open windows of a saloon, entered the garden. Evidently anxious to be alone, she walked quickly on, and as Doña Elvira was now quite free from apprehension, she did not attempt to hasten after her, but followed at a leisurely pace with the old duke. The meninas, enchanted to be freed from restraint, scattered themselves in different directions, and began to gather flowers.

Meantime, the Infanta continued to hurry on until she reached a more retired part of the garden. She was pursuing a shady path, when a noise at-

tracted her attention, and she perceived a man on the summit of the garden wall. It was the prince. A cry escaped her at the sight, and she hardly knew whether to remain or fly. While she was in this state of indecision, Charles leaped lightly to the ground, and hastened towards her.

"Fortune indeed has favoured me, princess," he cried, flinging himself on his knee before her and taking her hand. "I have entered this retreat, scarcely hoping to find you, but chance has brought me to you at once."

"You have done wrong to come here at all, prince," she rejoined. "But you must not stay. I would not have you discovered for the world. Strict orders have been given by Doña Elvira that you are not to be admitted to the casa, and if she finds you here she will think the meeting has been preconcerted."

"Let her think what she pleases, Maria," cried Charles. "I will not go. I cannot tear myself from you. I am never able to obtain a moment's private converse with you — never allowed to breathe my passion to you. Why should I be treated with all this form and coldness? Am I not your suitor? Why, then, should I be debarred from approaching you?"

"Because such is the custom in this court, prince," she replied. "A princess of the royal blood of Spain

is not allowed any interchange of affection with her suitor until after their espousals. It is against her honour, and would be accounted a reproach to her to see him alone. I must, therefore, beseech you to leave me instantly."

"Thus enjoined, I must needs obey you, Maria," cried Charles, rising.

"Stay, prince," she exclaimed, checking him. "I would not have you think me indifferent to you. Etiquette compels me to hide my feelings — to treat you as a stranger, with coldness and reserve. But I find it a hard part to play. Pity me, Charles — pity me — but do not blame me."

"Then you do love me, Maria?" he cried, rapturously.

"Can you doubt it, Charles, after what I have just said?" she replied, with a tenderness in her accents which they had never before betrayed. "But since nothing less will content you, I will own that I love you — love you dearly."

"My doubts are dispelled. My happiness is complete," cried the prince. "Oh! Maria, all I have undergone for your sake is more than requited."

"Oh, Charles!" she rejoined. "Henceforth you will understand me better. If I am compelled to act coldly towards you — to remain mute when you address me — you will know what is passing within. You will forgive me."

"You are an angel," he exclaimed.

And, carried away by his passion, he clasped her in his arms.

In an instant all the chains that etiquette had bound around the Infanta were broken. She did not attempt to disengage herself from her lover's embrace, but looked up tenderly in his face. Thus did they gaze at each other for a moment, and then their lips met.

"Maria, my beloved, I thus vow eternal fidelity to you," he cried.

"Charles, I am yours for ever. I swear it!" she rejoined, with equal fervour.

Thinking only of themselves, forgetting all the world beside, utterly unconscious of danger, they were still gazing fondly at each other, when the Infanta suddenly started.

"Fly, prince!" she cried. "Footsteps are approaching."

"A minute longer!" he implored.

"Not a second," she rejoined, "or we shall be discovered."

Scarcely were the words uttered than Doña Elvira and the Duke del Infantado issued from a side-path. If some dreadful spectacle had met her sight the dueña could not have looked more aghast.

"Holy Mother!" she exclaimed, with a scream.

"Look, duke! look! There they are together. Oh! I shall expire."

"Compose yourself, señora. You will have need of all your faculties," cried the old duke.

IV.

The Duke del Infantado.

For a few moments no movement was made on either side. Doña Elvira did not advance, expecting the Infanta to come to her, but the princess did not stir, neither did Charles relinquish her hand. The Duke del Infantado, whom we have already described as one of the proudest of the Castilian nobles, then stepped forward, and, making a profound obeisance to the Infanta, said,

"Permit me, princess, to conduct you to your governess."

She made no reply, but consulted Charles by a look.

"Do not forget that you are a daughter of the blood royal of Spain," said the old duke. "Do not forget what is due to the king your brother."

"I am not likely to forget what is due either to myself or to the king," rejoined the Infanta, proudly.

And she gave her hand to the old duke, who took it with the most profound respect, and deli-

vered her to Doña Elvira, who by this time had come up.

He then turned to Charles, and, making as deep a reverence as that he had just addressed to the Infanta, said, in accents of grave respect,

“Your highness will be pleased to excuse me. In the discharge of my office as governor of the Lady Infanta, I must entreat your highness to retire. I shall have the honour of attending you to the garden gate.”

Charles did not return the old duke’s salutation, but, regarding him with a lofty look, said,

“I shall use my own pleasure as to leaving the garden, my lord duke.”

“Be not offended with me, noble prince,” remonstrated the old duke. “Under any other circumstances, I would entreat your highness to remain here as long as might be agreeable to you — indeed, as his majesty’s representative, I would place this garden and palace at your disposal — but I beseech you now to depart.”

“No more, my lord duke,” rejoined Charles, coldly. “I have said that I shall consult my own pleasure as to the time and mode of my departure.”

“Prince,” cried the duke, casting himself at Charles’s feet, “I am an old man — old enough to be your grandsire — and my long life has been free

from reproach. I am also head of the oldest and proudest family of Castile, whose scutcheon is without stain. Do not bring disgrace and dishonour upon me. Do not let it be said that I neglected my trust. The Infanta is confided to my care, and I am answerable for her with my head. I do not blame your highness for the rash step you have just taken, because you have been incited to it by overpowering passion, which has blinded you to the consequences."

"What are the consequences, my lord duke?" said Charles, still maintaining a haughty and inflexible deportment.

"Death and dishonour to me, prince," replied the duke — "punishment little less severe to Doña Elvira — immurement in a convent to the Lady Infanta — and a certain rupture between his majesty and your highness."

"Tut! tut! you magnify the matter, my lord," said Charles, incredulously.

"Highness," rejoined the old duke, in a sad and reproachful voice, "the word of Juan Hurtado de Mendoza has never yet been doubted. By my father's soul, I speak the truth! Were my own life merely in jeopardy, I would urge you no further. But wrong will be done to others far greater than myself. The Infanta will suffer — the king himself suffer — all the grandees of Spain will suffer

by this violation of Spanish etiquette. Were he so minded, his majesty could not pass over the injury to his honour."

"No injury has been done to the king's honour, duke," said Charles. "I am the Infanta's suitor. Her hand has been promised me by his majesty. She herself has accepted me. I seek a momentary interview with her in private. I obtain it — that is all."

"Heaven keep all knowledge of the interview from my royal master!" cried the duke. "From me he shall never hear of it. As I have affirmed, he must resent it. Our nice sense of honour requires that no Castilian princess of the blood shall exchange a word in private with the suitor for her hand until after their espousals. This rule your highness has infringed. But I beseech you to reflect — for your own sake — for the sake of the Infanta — before you make the consequences of the step irretrievable."

"Rise, I pray you, my lord duke," said Charles, raising him. "You have convinced me. I see the error I have committed. I thank you for the devotion you have displayed to the Infanta — to my future consort. I will do as you desire."

"Nobly decided, prince," said the old duke.

While the Duke del Infantado had been thus pleading with the prince, the Infanta remained

standing at a little distance with Doña Elvira, resisting all the attempts of the latter to induce her to withdraw. She now stepped towards them, and with great dignity of manner said to the duke,

"My lord, after what has passed between you and the prince relative to my brief interview with his highness, I think it right to tell you that we have plighted our faith, and that I regard him as my husband."

"You have not the power so to plight yourself, princess," rejoined the duke, "and therefore the promise is not binding."

"You are mistaken, my lord," said the Infanta, haughtily; "my promise is inviolable. I will wed no other than Charles Stuart, unless he himself shall discharge me from my pledge."

"Do not deceive yourself, princess," said the old duke, "and do not mislead the prince. Unless such promises are solemnly ratified, and by the consent of the king your brother, they are of no account."

"I hold *my* promise sacred, my lord duke," cried Charles, "and I call upon you to attest it."

"Mine is equally sacred. Bear witness to my words, my lord," added the Infanta.

"I hear — I hear," exclaimed the duke, with some impatience, "but I tell you the king would hold such promises as nought, were they reported to him, which they never will be by me, for my

lips will remain always sealed in regard to this meeting. That you may be speedily united is my heartfelt wish, and that no impediment may arise to that consummation of all our hopes, I would urge his highness's immediate departure."

"Yes, you must go, prince — indeed you must," cried the Infanta. "So far the duke is right. If you are discovered, my brother will be so offended that I tremble for the consequences to us all. Adios!"

She then tripped towards Doña Elvira, and, having joined her, hurried along the path leading to the casa. After proceeding to some distance, Maria turned and perceived the prince still standing where she had left him, watching her. It being evident that he would not stir as long as she continued in sight, she waved an adieu to him, and turned into a side-path.

"I am ready now, my lord," said Charles, as the Infanta disappeared.

Not a word passed between them as they pursued their way, following the course of the wall that bounded the garden, but when at last they reached the gate, the old duke said,

"I shall take no precautions, feeling assured your highness will not attempt to scale this garden-wall again."

"Have no fear, my lord duke," replied Charles. "I shall not repeat the visit."

The gate was then unlocked, and Charles passed through it. Shortly afterwards he was joined by Buckingham and Gondomar, who were waiting for him.

V.

The Casa Saldana.

THE Casa Saldana was a large mansion, delightfully situated in the Paseo de Recoletos, which formed a continuation of the Prado; and though in the midst of all the life and gaiety of Madrid, it had some of the advantages of a country-house, possessing large and delightful gardens, and being surrounded by a wood, to which the conde had private access.

When Graham paid his first visit to the casa he was received with open arms by the old conde who appeared enchanted to see him, and renewed all his former expressions of gratitude for the service rendered by Graham to himself and his daughter. He also spoke of his surprise on learning that his deliverers were no other than the Prince of Wales and his attendants. The conde was alone at the time, and when Graham inquired after Doña Casilda, the old hidalgo told him she was in the garden, and at once conducted him thither. On issuing forth, and crossing a trimly-kept grass-plot, bordered by flower beds, they found Doña Casilda seated in an

harbour with two other persons, who proved to be her sister, Doña Flor, and Don Pompeo de Tarsis.

Casilda greeted her lover with undisguised delight. Graham thought her looking lovelier than ever, and certainly she was seen to much greater advantage than she had been after the robber attack in the gorge of Pancorbo. Her costume was the same as that worn by every other Spanish lady — namely, a black silk dress edged with magnificent lace, and a mantilla. Nothing could have better suited her beauty than this attire. Her jetty tresses — so intensely black that they looked almost blue — were adorned by a blush rose fastened at the side of her head, and she shielded herself from the sun with her fan. After their first greetings were over, Doña Casilda introduced him to Doña Flor and Don Pompeo.

“This is Don Ricardo — my gallant deliverer — of whom you have heard me speak so often,” said Casilda, presenting him to her sister.

A blush overspread Doña Flor’s features as she returned Graham’s salutation.

“I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Don Ricardo,” she said. “I believe you are a friend of the Duke de Cea. I have heard him speak of you, and in very flattering terms.”

Evidently the reference to the Duke de Cea did not operate as a recommendation to Don Pompeo,

for he bowed very stiffly when Graham was presented to him.

Shortly afterwards the old conde and his son-in-law quitted the arbour, leaving Graham to the two ladies, with whom he engaged in a very lively conversation. After awhile Doña Flor made some excuse for quitting them, and Graham was then enabled to pour forth his love, which he did in the most passionate terms. There was nothing perhaps in the words, but the unmistakable fervour with which they were uttered gave them the force of the most eloquent pleading. Coming direct from the heart of the speaker, they made their way at once to the heart of her who listened to them. Casilda's heightened colour and agitation proclaimed their effect upon her. But she cast down her eyes, and did not dare to meet Graham's gaze.

"You do not answer me, Casilda," he cried, at last. "You do not love me."

"Oh, do not say so, Ricardo!" she rejoined, raising her magnificent black eyes, and fixing them tenderly upon him. "Yes, yes, I love you. But do you not know that my father has promised me to another?"

"I have heard so," replied Graham. "But he will not force you to wed against your inclinations."

"My father is a Castilian, Ricardo, and unless

Don Christóbal de Gavina will release him from his promise, he must fulfil it."

"But you — you will never consent, Casilda?" cried Graham.

"Alas! I shall not be consulted," she replied.

Just as the words were uttered, a young richly-dressed cavalier was seen to issue from the open window of the casa, and make his way across the grass-plot towards the arbour. This personage, who had a distinguished air, was tall — very tall for a Spaniard — well made, and handsome. His complexion was swarthy, his eyes dark and full of fire. He was attired in a doublet and mantle of black velvet laced with silver, and had tall white plumes in his black hat.

A strange feeling crossed Graham as he regarded this personage, and seemed to warn him of the approach of an enemy.

The look of inquiry which he addressed to Casilda was thus answered, "Yes, it is Don Christóbal."

"I felt sure of it," he mentally ejaculated. "By Heaven! he is no contemptible rival."

Shortly afterwards the two young men were brought face to face, and Don Christóbal, who proved to be extremely courteous, manifested no displeasure on finding his intended bride conversing with a handsome stranger. On the contrary, he seemed pleased to make Graham's acquaintance.

His presence, however, operated as a restraint to Graham and Doña Casilda, and little more passed between them. By this time the rest of the party had returned to the harbour, and the conversation, which had now become general, began to turn upon the prince's visit to Madrid, and Doña Flor and her sister both expressed great anxiety to know when his highness's nuptials with the Infanta would be solemnised.

"We must apply to you, Don Ricardo," remarked Don Christóbal, turning to Graham. "You must be well informed. Is the day yet fixed?"

"I have not heard so," returned Graham.

"In my opinion, the prince's gallantry deserves a prompt reward," said Doña Casilda. "The marriage ought to take place immediately."

"The Pope's consent has to be obtained, and his Holiness seems in no hurry to give it," observed Graham.

"Everybody says the prince is about to become a convert," pursued Casilda. "I hope it is true, and then perhaps all his suite will follow his example."

"If the prince becomes a proselyte, I will, señora," replied Graham.

"You think you can safely make that promise, I suppose, señor," laughed Casilda.

"The prince only needs to be freed from his heretical notions to be perfect," pursued Doña Flor.

"A more gallant cavalier I never beheld. He eclipsed all who attended him in the procession."

"Even the king?" said Graham.

"Yes, even the king," she rejoined. "The Infanta is most fortunate in obtaining such a husband."

"You speak as if the affair were quite settled," remarked Don Pompeo, gravely. "But I believe the marriage to be as far off as ever, and it will not surprise me if it should not take place at all."

"Impossible! after all the prince has done," cried Casilda. "Were I the Infanta, I *would* have him, in spite of his majesty and the Conde-Duque."

Some laughter followed this remark, but Don Pompeo did not join in it.

"You talk foolishly, Casilda," he said. "State marriages are not like other marriages. Religious differences are at the bottom of the delay. If the prince becomes a convert, all will be settled. But I don't think that event will occur."

"You doubt everything," said Doña Flor. "How long are the court festivities to continue, Don Christóbal?"

"Till the prince is weary of them," he replied. "Next week there will be a grand bull-fight in the Plaza Mayor, at which the prince and the Infanta, with the king and queen and all the court, will assist. If you have never seen a bull-fight, Don

Ricardo," he added, turning to Graham, "you will see one in perfection on this occasion. It will be a magnificent affair. There will be splendid bulls and splendid horses.

"Oh! charming! charming! — that will be delightful!" cried both ladies, clapping their hands.

"I am curious to behold the national spectacle," remarked Graham. "You are a skilful torero, I am told, señor," he added to Don Christóbal.

"Oh! I have killed some bulls in my time," replied the other. "It is a very exciting sport — nothing like it."

"I wish you could take part in the exhibition, Don Ricardo," observed Casilda.

"If you desire it, I will," he replied, gallantly. "The Duke de Cea has asked me to be his companion in the ring. I have had no practice in such sports, but as I am a tolerably good horseman, and have a quick eye and a strong hand, I fancy I should be a match for a bull."

"With De Cea in the ring with you, you will be in no danger," said Don Christóbal.

"Yes, yes — the duke is an admirable picador!" exclaimed Doña Flor, rapturously.

Don Pompeo looked sternly at his wife, but made no remark.

"I adore a bull-fight," said Doña Casilda. "A cavalier never appears to so great advantage in a

lady's eyes as when engaged in a contest with the fierce and active animal."

"I am glad I shall have an opportunity of so displaying myself, señora," said Graham. "I would ask permission to wear your colours."

"May I grant it?" she said, turning to Don Christóbal.

"No, that is a license I can grant to no man," he replied. "I shall wear your colours myself, Casilda. You may not be aware, señor," he added, turning with constrained courtesy to Graham, "that this lady is contracted to me."

"Yes, I am aware of the engagement," returned Graham. "And I feel I ought not to have made the request."

Thinking the conversation was taking an awkward turn, and might lead to a quarrel, the Conde de Saldana proposed an adjournment to the house. A significant glance from Doña Casilda warned Graham of the mistake he had committed, and he determined to be more cautious in future.

By his subsequent deportment he endeavoured to set matters right, but it was evident that Don Christóbal's jealousy had been aroused. Neither did Doña Casilda's betrothed seem pleased when her father again begged Graham to make the Casa Saldana his home.

With the exception of the misunderstanding

which had thus arisen between him and Don Cristóbal, Graham had reason to be satisfied with his visit. He had received from Casilda's own lips an assurance that she loved him, and though many difficulties were in the way, he felt confident of ultimate success.

A trifling incident, however, occurred prior to his departure which caused him some uneasiness. While he was crossing a patio, covered with an awning to exclude the sun, he noticed in the upper gallery of the quadrangle a young woman, who was leaning over the railing and regarding him earnestly. Her features, which were strikingly handsome, seemed familiar to Graham, but at first he could not tell where, or under what circumstances, he had previously seen her. All at once it flashed across him that it must be Rose des Bois, the damsel he had met in the robbers' cottage in the Forest of Orléans; and further scrutiny convinced him he was right. Rose's looks plainly showed that she had recognised him, and her large dark eyes followed him as he walked through the patio. Graham wondered how she came there, and her presence was anything but agreeable to him. An instinctive feeling told him she would be in the way, and prove an enemy to his love-affair with Doña Casilda.

The only person with him at the moment when he thus beheld her was the Conde de Saldana, who

with true Spanish politeness insisted upon attending his guest to the door.

"I think I have seen that damsel before," remarked Graham, pointing to Rose. "But, if I am not mistaken, it was near Orléans."

"That is not unlikely," replied the conde. "She has but just arrived from France."

"She must have travelled very quickly," said Graham. "I should not have thought it possible she could get here in so short a time."

"She was brought on by a Spanish family who were travelling from Paris to Madrid, and by whom she was recommended to my daughter," said the conde. "Casilda has taken an extraordinary fancy to her, and as Doña Engracia, her dueña, is unwell, I have appointed Rosa — for so the damsel is named — to attend upon her."

Graham made no remark, though the latter piece of information was far from satisfactory to him, as he felt sure he should not be able to elude Rose's vigilance as easily as he might have done that of Doña Engracia.

But he had now arrived at the outer door, and as he took leave the conde prayed him to consider himself one of the family, and to come whenever he felt disposed, promising him a hearty welcome.

VI.

A Midnight Meeting.

CHARLES had given up all hopes of another interview with the Infanta, and had again lapsed into a state of doubt and despondency, when he was revived by the Duke de Cea, who appeared before him one morning with a radiant countenance, and said,

“At last I have succeeded. Your highness shall see the princess to-night. I cannot tell you where, at this moment, because the meeting has to be arranged by the Countess de Olivarez, who has promised her assistance, but I will come to your chamber at midnight, and conduct you to the place of rendezvous.”

Thanking the young duke warmly, Charles promised to be in readiness at the hour appointed. On seeking his chamber that night, he dismissed his attendants, and sat down to read, but he was far too much excited to be able to fix his attention on the volume before him, though it recounted the adventures of the renowned Don Quixote, and he at last laid the marvellous romance aside, and began to pace to and fro within the room. Shortly before midnight the door was softly opened, and De Cea entered the room.

The young duke's countenance showed that all

was right, so, without stopping to question him, Charles hastily donned his cloak and hat, and bade him lead on.

"Whither are you taking me, duke?" said the prince, as they descended a private staircase.

"To the patio," replied De Cea. "There your highness will find the Lady Infanta."

Traversing a corridor on the ground floor, they soon reached the patio, which was situated, as already mentioned, at the rear of the prince's quarter of the palace.

This beautiful Arabian court formed part of the ancient Alcazar, and was surrounded by marble arcades. The interior was filled with orange-trees, and in the centre there was a fountain. At that still hour the court was charming. The air was loaded with fragrance, and all was so hushed in repose that the plashing of the fountain in its marble basin could be distinctly heard. One side of the patio was lighted up by the moon, the other buried in gloom.

On entering the court, Charles gazed anxiously down the moonlit arcade, but, seeing no one, he proceeded to the farther side, where two female figures, attired in black, and draped in mantillas, met his view. Both ladies were masked, but Charles entertained no doubt that they were the Infanta and the Countess de Olivarez.

As he hurried towards them, De Cea stood still, while one of the masked dames, instead of waiting for the prince's approach, withdrew to the farther end of the arcade. Charles was thus left alone with the other, and on reaching her he immediately threw himself at her feet, and seizing her hand, pressed it passionately to his lips, imploring her to remove her mask.

Unable to resist his passionate importunities, the Infanta took off her mask, and regarded him for some moments with a tenderness which she did not seek to disguise. There was no necessity to avow her love by words. Her looks proclaimed the state of her feelings.

The rapture of those moments — the certainty he then obtained that his passion was requited — made Charles ample amends for all the anxiety he had endured. Arising from his kneeling posture, but without quitting the hand which the Infanta did not seek to withdraw, he gazed at her long and passionately.

“Oh, Maria!” he cried, at length. “The bliss of this moment would be cheaply purchased by a kingdom. A crown without you to share it with me would be valueless in my eyes. So deeply — so fervently do I love you, that I would rather tarry with you in some lowly dwelling in Spain than return to my father's palace without you.”

"Have a care, prince," she rejoined. "You assert too much. I shall put your love to the test. I do not ask you to make any worldly sacrifice for me. I do not desire you to make further concessions to the king my brother — I love you, Charles Stuart, I love you — I will be a true and loving wife to you — I will make your country my country — your people my people. But before I do this, I require that you conform to the holy faith of Rome."

"Impossible, Maria. You ask the only sacrifice I cannot make," replied Charles, in a sad but resolute tone.

"You do not love me as deeply as you have affirmed," she said, reproachfully. "If you did, you could not hesitate. But I can never wed you save on this condition."

"You crush all my hopes by the determination, Maria," cried the prince, in a voice of anguish. "And if you persist in it, all chance of our union is over. But the king your brother has made no such condition. He can dispose of your hand as he thinks fit."

"Not so," she replied, firmly. "Philip can prevent my marriage, but he cannot force me into an alliance to which I am opposed. I will withdraw from the world altogether, and immure myself in a convent, rather than endanger my soul."

"You terrify me, Maria," cried Charles; "but I can scarcely believe you seriously contemplate so fatal a step."

"I trust the step will never be necessary," she rejoined. "I still fondly persuade myself that I shall be able to convert you. My confessor, Padre Ambrosio, is a good man — an excellent man — and has your interest at heart. Will you see him? — will you listen to him, if I send him to you?"

"I will do anything you require," replied Charles. "But I announce beforehand that Father Ambrosio will throw away his time in attempting my conversion."

"But for my sake listen to him. I have promised him that you will do so."

"You have promised him — ha?" cried Charles. "Now, tell me frankly, Maria, has not Father Ambrosio charged you to attempt my conversion?"

"I will not deny it. I could not disguise from him what passed between us in the garden of the Casa del Campo, and he has warned me of my danger in marrying a heretic. But he believes that he can convince you of your errors, and feels certain you will embrace our faith."

"One question more, Maria," said Charles. "Is Father Ambrosio aware that you intended to meet me to-night? Nay, I am sure he is," he pursued, after a slight pause. "Did he not prompt you

what to say to me? Did he not tell you to make my conversion the indispensable condition of our union? You cannot deny it. Well, you have fulfilled his instructions."

"Would I could assure him that I have made an impression upon you, Charles!" she said.

"Tell him so," he rejoined.

"May I?" she exclaimed, joyfully.

"Certainly; and if he questions you closely — as no doubt he will — add that you have hopes of my assent — for you *have* hopes, I am sure."

"May I say so much as that?" she cried. "I fear my arguments will never prevail with you, but if you will listen to Padre Ambrosio, he cannot fail to convince you. See him — only see him!"

"Willingly, since you desire it," rejoined Charles. "Indeed, I desire to be on good terms with Padre Ambrosio."

"From this moment you may calculate upon his zealous co-operation," said the Infanta. "He will now promote our union as much as he has hitherto opposed it."

Their further discourse was here interrupted by the Duke de Cea, who, stepping quickly towards them, said, in a low, warning voice, "Some one approaches!"

At this alarm, Maria instantly resumed her mask.

"Adios, prince," she cried.

"Do not go till you have promised to meet me again, Maria," cried Charles, detaining her.

"I cannot stay. We shall be discovered. Santa Maria! it is too late," she cried, as two cavaliers entered the arcade.

By this time the Countess de Olivarez had joined the party.

"What shall we do, countess?" said the Infanta, in great trepidation.

"Stay where you are, princess. There is nothing to fear. Those intruders will pass on," rejoined the countess, in a low voice.

"By Heaven, it is the king!" said De Cea. "We are lost."

"Madre santissima! my brother!" cried the Infanta. "What will he say to me?"

It was a moment of great perplexity, and even Charles felt himself placed in a position of the utmost embarrassment. No doubt could now be entertained that it was the king, and that the person by whom his majesty was attended was the Conde-Duque.

The only hope was that Philip and Olivarez would pass on. But they did not do so. Both ladies were masked, and Charles had pulled his hat over his brow and muffled his face in his cloak, so that his features could not be distinguished.

"Who have we here?" demanded Philip.

Finding that nothing else could be done, De Cea plucked up his courage, and stepped towards the king.

"'Tis I, sire," he said.

"De Cea!" cried Philip.

"Hush, sire! do not betray me," said the duke. "Your majesty is too gallant to interrupt a little love-affair."

"Who is the other cavalier? There can be no reason for concealment on his part," said the king.

"I implore your majesty to excuse my answering the question," said De Cea.

"I must be satisfied," said Philip. "I have strong suspicions. Who is it?"

"Since your majesty compels me to speak, I must own that it is the Duke of Buckingham," replied De Cea.

"Buckingham!" exclaimed Olivarez. "And who are the ladies with him?"

"Ay, who are they?" demanded the king.

"You cannot expect me to reveal their names, sire."

"What! my lord — you refuse to satisfy me?"

"I am bound to do so, sire."

"Then I will have an answer from their own lips," said Philip. "Bid them come to me."

"Nay, I beseech your majesty not to pursue this

inquiry further," rejoined De Cea, beginning to be seriously alarmed.

"Heed not what he says, sire," remarked Olivarez, in a low voice. "There is something wrong here."

"Obey my orders, duke," said Philip, authoritatively.

Almost at his wits' end, De Cea returned to the others and told them what the king required. For a moment they appeared confounded, and the Infanta declared she would throw herself at her brother's feet and implore his pardon.

"No, no, we may yet get over the difficulty," said the countess. "Speak to the Conde-Duque, while I address the king. Courage, princess — courage!"

With this the countess tripped towards Philip, and, taking him aside, said:

"I trust myself to your majesty. You will not betray me to my husband."

"Cielo! is it you, countess?" cried Philip, in surprise.

"Not so loud, sire, I entreat of you," she rejoined. "The lady with me is Doña Flor."

"Enough," returned Philip. "Pray excuse the stupid act I have committed. I will not detain you a moment longer."

Meanwhile, the Infanta approached the Conde-Duque, and drew him aside.

"Your excellency must help me in this strait," she said. "The king will never forgive me if he learns the truth."

"Is it possible it can be the Infanta?" cried Olivarez.

"Do you not recognise my voice?" she rejoined.

"Yes, yes," he answered. But why are you here, princess, with the Duke of Buckingham?"

"That is not Buckingham, my lord — it is the prince."

"The prince!" exclaimed Olivarez. "Nay, then I cannot hide the matter from his majesty."

"Hold, my lord!" said the Infanta. "This private meeting with the prince has been sanctioned by Padre Ambrosio. You will be satisfied with the result when I tell you that his highness is likely to become a proselyte to the faith of Rome. He has consented to see Padre Ambrosio to-morrow."

"Ah! that is good news indeed," cried Olivarez. "Padre Ambrosio has pursued the best plan to convert the prince. You shall have no interference from me, princess. I will make some excuse to the king." Then, turning to Philip, he added, "Your majesty need not question this lady."

"No; it is sufficient that you have spoken to her," replied the king. "I know who she is."

"Indeed, sire!" exclaimed Olivarez, uneasily.

"Yes, it is Doña Flor," rejoined Philip.

"Very true," said Olivarez, laughing. "He little thinks it is the Infanta. A propos, sire, who is the other lady?"

"Nay, your excellency must excuse me. I am bound to secrecy. He little thinks it is his wife," thought Philip, laughing to himself.

Then, bowing to the two ladies, who deferentially returned his salutation, he quitted the patio with Olivarez.

As soon as they were gone, Charles, who had remained stationary, joined the group.

"Admirably managed!" he cried. "You have extricated yourselves from this difficulty with wonderful skill."

"I can't tell how I got through it," said the Infanta. "I was never so frightened in my life."

"I had most cause for alarm," observed De Cea, laughing. "Had a discovery been made, my head would not have remained long on my shoulders."

"In getting out of one difficulty I have fallen, into another," said the countess. "His majesty must have a dreadful opinion of me."

"Don't trouble yourself on that score, dear countess," said the Infanta. "All will be satisfactorily explained hereafter. But I must regain my apartments as soon as possible. Good night,

prince," she added to Charles. "Remember your promise to see Padre Ambrosio."

So saying, she hurried away with the countess, moving off in the opposite direction from that taken by the king and his minister.

VII.

In which Archie reads the Prince a Lecture.

GENERALLY, about an hour before noon, all the persons composing Charles's suite would assemble in the great gallery adjoining his apartments, and after amusing themselves there for some time, talking over the court gossip, and retailing such anecdotes as they had picked up, they repaired to the ante-chamber, where they remained until they were admitted to the prince's presence. Most of them were young men, and their principal motive in coming to Madrid being amusement, they had no reason to be dissatisfied. Ever since the prince's arrival there had been an uninterrupted series of royal festivities, in which of course they had shared. The most unbounded hospitality was displayed towards all Englishmen. They were everywhere welcome. Every house was open to them. The bewitching Madrileñas smiled upon them, and the proudest Castilians unbent towards them. How they requited this consideration we have shown.

On the morning after the midnight meeting of the royal lovers in the patio, described in the previous chapter, the greater part of the English visitants were collected in the grand gallery. Almost all, as we have said, were young, handsome, richly attired, and of distinguished appearance. Silken doublets of various hues, velvet mantles richly embroidered, plumed and jewelled hats, constituted their attire. A more joyous band could not be found. They talked and laughed loudly, shouted to each other, sang, danced, smoked, and practised fencing. One group, which consisted of Lord Andover, Sir Richard Carr, and Sir Robert Goring, were seated at a table in the embrasure of a window playing at cards. Not far from them, surrounded by a circle of laughing spectators, Lord Rochford and Tom Carey were rattling castanets and practising a bolero, which they had seen danced overnight. Farther on there was another ring, in the midst of which were two gay gallants keeping their hands in with a little harmless sword-play. Somewhat removed from the rest were the Earl of Carlisle and Lord Mountjoy conversing with Sir Francis Steward, who was about to return to England; while flitting from group to group, jesting with all, might be seen a grotesque little personage in a motley garb, with a coxcomb on his head, and a bauble in his hand. This was Archie Armstrong.

Seeing Sir Richard Graham enter the gallery, the jester went to meet him.

“Good day, my merry gossip,” said Graham. “I have scarce had a word with thee since thy arrival in Madrid. How dost like the city, the court, the king, the queen, and the Infanta?”

“You ask me too many questions in a breath, gossip,” replied Archie, “but I will strive to answer them. I like the city well, though it be not so large nor so well built as I expected. But ’tis a fine city nevertheless, and has a gayer air than London. I like the dresses of the Madrileños, and, sooth to say, I like their manners. I like to hear the tinkling of a guitar, and to listen to a serenade at night. And then those adorable, dark-eyed señoras — I am enchanted with them, and so are they with me, for that matter. As to the court, I prefer it to Whitehall.”

“How so, gossip?” said Graham.

“I like the grandees, with their proud carriage and stately manners,” replied the jester. “They really look like nobles. As to his Most Catholic Majesty, I will tell you what I think of him when we get back. I am afraid to speak my mind here. But I will just whisper in your ear that the real king is Olivarez. Whether Philip is fortunate in his choice of a favourite and prime minister, I won’t pretend to say, but he is certainly fortunate in his

spouse. And now as to the Infanta. Looking at her with the eyes of Babie Charlie, I should discover nothing but what is captivating. But looking at her with my own eyes, I am not so greatly delighted. Beautiful she is, no doubt, but it is not a beauty to my taste, and her excessive coldness of manner may please the prince, but it wouldn't suit me. I have a dark-eyed señora in my eye at this moment whom I should infinitely prefer to her."

"Who has thus taken thy fancy, gossip?"

"Be not jealous when I name her to you. 'Tis Doña Casilda, daughter of the Conde de Saldana."

"Doña Casilda!" exclaimed Graham. "Where hast thou seen her?"

"I saw her yesterday, when she came to the palace with her father," replied the jester. "Think you she could escape my observation?"

"Well, I agree with thee in thy estimate of her beauty," said Graham.

"I knew you would, gossip," rejoined Archie, knowingly. "Between ourselves, I think you have a much better chance of taking back a wife than our illustrious prince."

"I know not that, Archie," said Graham. "In my case there is a rival."

"A rival is easily got rid of by a man of your mettle, gossip," rejoined the jester. "But, though the prince has no rival -- at least, that I know of

— he has what is far worse, a cunning minister to deal with, who will not let him have the prize he covets, unless he pays dearly for it. Mark my words, gossip. I have not been many days in this palace, but I have had my eyes and ears open, and I have seen and heard enough to convince me that unless Babie Charlie turns Papist he won't have the Infanta. What is more, all the royal household feel certain he will become a proselyte."

"You think so?" cried Graham.

"I am sure of it," said Archie. "What would my royal gossip say if he knew of his son's danger?"

"Danger!" exclaimed Graham, contemptuously. "You do not for an instant imagine that the prince is likely to yield."

"There is no saying what influence may be brought to bear upon him," said Archie. "In my opinion, it would have been better if he had stayed at home."

"Perhaps it might," returned Graham, thoughtfully. "Well, I am going to present myself to his highness."

"I am with you," said Archie. "I mean to read him a lecture."

With this, they proceeded to the ante-chamber. On entering it, the usher informed them that Padre Ambrosio was with the prince, and that his high-

ness could not be disturbed — a piece of information that astounded Graham, and elicited a shrug from the jester.

Ere long the confessor came forth, and his exulting looks seemed to indicate that his interview with Charles had been perfectly satisfactory to him.

On entering the cabinet, Graham and the jester found Charles standing near a table in a pensive posture — indeed, he was so preoccupied that he did not notice them, and two or three minutes elapsed before he became aware of their presence. Even when he did perceive them, he did not trouble himself to speak.

“I will rouse him from his reverie,” said Archie. And marching towards the table, he called out in a voice so exactly resembling the broad Scottish accents of his royal master, James, that the prince absolutely started.

“Babie Charlie! Babie Charlie!” said the jester, “I didna expect this from you, my sweet bairn. When I trusted you to gang to Spain to fetch the Infanta, I was sair troubled at heart, as ye ken, but I didna think ye wad disobey my injunctions.”

“How?” exclaimed Charles.

“Hear what I have to say to ye, sir, and dinna interrupt me,” cried Archie. “In trustin’ you to the court of Spain, I knew fu’ weel the dangers awaitin’ you, but I didna expect ye wad voluntarily

thrust your neck into the noose. I didna think ye wad give a private audience to a Romish priest, whose sole aim is to bring ye over to his idolatrous faith. I little thought ye wad listen to him, and send him away gleeful and triumphant. But I canna believe he has prevailed wi' ye — I canna believe ye hae fallen."

"Peace, sirrah!" cried Charles, sharply.

"Is that the way ye address your auld dad, ye graceless and ungrateful bairn?" said Archie, in a reproachful tone — "bid him haud his tongue when he gies ye guid counsel. If ye shut your ears, ye are lost. Resist the wiles of these priests, I tell you; and listen to the discourses of the twa devout chaplains I have sent ye, Doctors Man and Wren. Ye will also hear the truth frae my gossip, Archie, who, though he wears a fule's cap, is a wise and discreet man, and a determined foe to papistry. Listen to Archie, my bairn — listen to Archie!"

"I have listened to him too long," remarked Charles, unable to repress a smile.

"Not a whit," said the jester, gravely. "You should listen to all that Archie has to say. He kens how loth I was to let ye depart — how miserable I have been lest any mischance should befa' ye — how I hae dreaded the blandishments of these Romish priests. Archie can explain my feelings towards you as weel as I could do myself. He will warn

you, if necessary. , Ah! Babie Charlie, oft and oft have I said to Archie, 'My son had better come back without his bonnie bride than make any bargain wi' the Church of Rome.'

"And what leads thee to imagine that I have made any such bargain, sirrah?" said Charles.

"The exulting grin that lighted up the features of the crafty carl who has just left the cabinet," replied Archie. "He misdoubts not that he has produced an impression upon you."

At this moment the Duke of Buckingham entered the cabinet, magnificently attired as usual, and seated himself without ceremony at the table beside the prince.

"I have just been receiving a lecture, Geordie," said Charles, laughing.

"A lecture! — from whom?" cried the duke.

"Frae me — frae yer auld dad and gossip, Steenie," said Archie, once more mimicking the voice and gestures of James. "I hae spoken to Babie Charlie, and now I hae a word to say to you. Didna ye promise me to take every care of my son? Didna ye engage to guard him frae a' dangers? Ye canna deny it. Aweel! He canna be in worse danger than he is at this moment."

"What means the knave?" cried Buckingham, glancing at the prince.

"My meaning will be plain to ye, Steenie, if ye

will but listen," said Archie. "Efforts are being made to lure Babie Charlie frae his faith. A Romish priest has just been closeted wi' him, and has gone away wi' the smile of triumph on his lip, thinking he has convinced my son. Is this the way ye fulfil your promises to me, Steenie? Is this the care ye take of my bairn?"

"By my soul!" cried Buckingham, "if there be any truth in this statement, I deserve the knave's reproaches. Is it possible that your highness has had an interview with a Romish priest?"

"Padre Ambrosio, the Infanta's confessor, has just been with me," replied Charles, gravely, "and we have been discussing points of faith. He is a man of learning and ability, and I listened to him with pleasure. I have no doubt he persuaded himself that he had produced a certain impression upon me. I allowed him to depart with that conviction."

"He must be quickly undeceived," cried Buckingham, rising. "Be that my business."

"Calm yourself, Geordie, and sit down," cried Charles. "I had a motive for thus throwing dust into the confessor's eyes. He can enable me to see the Infanta when I please."

"That is possible," rejoined the duke, "but you will purchase the privilege too dearly. Padre Ambrosio is an agent of the Nuncio. Intelligence will be immediately despatched to the Pope that ~~you~~

highness's conversion is probable, and the dispensation will be delayed in anticipation of that event. Now that you have held out hopes, nothing less will content them. You have undone all we have been labouring to accomplish. But I must try to set it right."

"Be not hasty, Geordie, or you will mar my project."

At this moment an usher entered, and announced his excellency the Conde-Duque M. Olivarez.

"The very person I desired to see," cried Buckingham.

"Do not offend him, Geordie, I conjure you — I command you," cried Charles.

As Olivarez entered, Graham and the jester retired.

VIII.

Of the Arguments employed by Olivarez to induce Charles to become a Convert.

"He *has* seen Padre Ambrosio," muttered Buckingham, watching the minister as he made a profound obeisance to the prince.

As Olivarez bowed to him, he returned the salutation somewhat haughtily.

"I am glad to find you here, my lord duke," said Olivarez, without noticing the slight, "because I wish you to hear what I have to say to his high-

ness. I have reason to believe," he pursued, turning to Charles, "that since your highness has been in this most Catholic country, and has had an opportunity of witnessing the rites of that faith, a change has taken place in your sentiments, and that at no distant date we may hope to receive you into the pale of our Church. If these expectations should be realised, and your highness should happily be induced to return to the faith of your fathers, it will be a source of the highest gratification to the king my master, and will at once remove all obstacles to your union with the Infanta."

"Were the prince to take such a step, he would never be King of England," said Buckingham. "His subjects would rise in rebellion against him."

"I do not think so," replied Olivarez, "because I believe the Catholic party to be still strong in England. But if there should be a rebellion, Spain will lend him her armies and navies to quell it."

"If the prince can listen calmly to such a proposition, my lord, it is more than I can," cried Buckingham.

"Pardon me, my lord duke," said Olivarez, "I addressed myself to the prince. I beg your highness will not allow any fears of the consequences to deter you from taking this step. United as they would be under such circumstances, England and

Spain might defy the world. It is not only to your spiritual, but to your temporal advantage, that you should embrace the faith of Rome. England is divided into sects, which the want of energy on the part of your royal father is allowing to grow into dangerous importance. You must crush them with an iron arm. You must annihilate puritanism, or it will overthrow the monarchy. You must have but one religion, and that the religion of Rome. You must extirpate heresy by the same means that it has been extirpated here. Thus you will become a far more powerful sovereign than the king your father. Your throne will be secure. Blessed with the Infanta, strictly allied to Spain, I trust your reign will be long and glorious."

"I will weigh what your excellency has said," observed Charles.

"I beseech your highness to do so," replied Olivarez. "And if you desire to confer with any of our churchmen, they shall attend upon you. They would be delighted to assist in so good a work."

"I thank your excellency, but I do not need their aid," replied Charles. "When I have arrived at a decision, I will let you know."

"Heaven enlighten your heart, and enable you to pursue your purpose!" cried Olivarez. "I shall await your decision with impatience, and so will the king."

"Not a word to his majesty at present, I pray your excellency," said Charles.

"Your highness's request shall be observed," said Olivarez, bowing, and preparing to depart.

"Hold! my lord," cried Buckingham. "I cannot for a moment believe that the prince seriously entertains any design of abandoning the Protestant faith and adopting that of Rome, but be assured, if it should be so, I will most strenuously oppose it."

"I count upon your opposition, my lord duke," rejoined Olivarez; but I persuade myself I have convinced his highness of the policy of the step, and he will, I trust, adopt it."

"Indulge no such hope, my lord," said Buckingham. "I can prevent him from doing so — and I will."

"Aha! what is this I hear?" cried Olivarez. "Are you the prince's master, my lord duke?"

"I am the representative of his august father," replied Buckingham. "He must listen to my remonstrances."

"That remains to be seen," replied Olivarez. And with a profound bow to Charles he quitted the cabinet.

"What means this, prince?" cried Buckingham, as soon as he was gone. "If you have formed any such fatal resolution — for fatal it would be —

I must enjoin, in your royal father's name, your immediate return to England — with or without the Infanta."

"Do not alarm yourself, Geordie," rejoined Charles, laughing. "There is no danger of my turning Papist. This is a mere ruse. I thought you would see through it."

"See through it! Not I!" cried the duke. "You played the dissembler so well, that you completely imposed upon me. But what is your motive for thus deluding Padre Ambrosio and Olivarez?"

"My motive ought to be obvious to you. It is to baffle their designs. Hitherto, as you know, they have secretly opposed my union with the Infanta. Now they will promote it."

"But they will be more bitterly opposed to it than ever, when they find out that they have been duped," said the duke.

"At all events, a temporary advantage will be gained, and that is something," observed Charles.

"Thank Heaven I have had no part in the scheme, for I cannot approve of it," remarked Buckingham.

"You will have to play a very important part in it, Geordie, before I have done," rejoined Charles. "But come with me. I am about to drive to the House of Seven Chimneys. I must

see my chaplains, Doctors Man and Wren, and let them know how I have duped Olivarez."

"If you are going to call on Bristol, I pray your highness to excuse me," said Buckingham.

"Nay, I will take no excuse," said Charles. "I must reconcile your differences with Bristol."

"Reconciliation between us is impossible," said Buckingham. "I hate him too deeply to affect to be on friendly terms with him. However, I am ready to attend your highness."

Charles then quitted the cabinet, and traversing the grand gallery, where the tumult instantly ceased on his appearance, proceeded to the great court. Entering one of the royal carriages with Buckingham, he desired to be driven to the House of Seven Chimneys.

IX.

The Royal Bull-fight in the Plaza Mayor.

At length the long-looked-for day arrived on which the grand national spectacle of a bull-fight was to be offered by the king to his royal visitor. As the exhibition was to be conducted on a magnificent scale, and as the circus ordinarily devoted to such shows was insufficient to contain a tithe of the persons who desired to witness it, it was resolved to construct an amphitheatre in the Plaza

Mayor, which should almost rival the Coliseum at Rome in its enormous size.

The Plaza Mayor, by far the largest square in Madrid, was of very recent construction at the period of our history, having only been completed about four years previously — namely, in 1619 — in the reign of Philip III., by Juan Gomez de Mora. To make way for this immense plaza, the architect had to remove many ancient habitations, the site having been chosen in the most crowded part of the city, though at no great distance from the royal palace — but the result was to give to Madrid one of the largest and most superb squares in Europe. The four façades of the plaza are surrounded by porticos, the lofty and elegant pillars of which support the upper stories of the habitations. The architecture of these houses is uniform and of a noble character, and stately archways open upon the street by which the plaza is approached.

From the period of its construction to the present time, the Plaza Mayor, so well adapted by its size and situation for such exhibitions, has been the scene of some of the most striking public ceremonials enacted in Madrid. In this vast area, in the presence of the sovereign and the court and of two-thirds of the entire population, which can easily be there congregated, tournaments on the grandest

scale have been held, masques, fêtes, and bull-fights have been displayed, while spectacles of a more lugubrious character have also been there performed. In the midst of the Plaza Mayor the scaffold has often been erected and dyed with the noblest blood of Castile, and the fires of the terrible auto-da-fé have frequently been lighted. Thousands of victims to the merciless Inquisition have there perished.

The extensive preparations for the spectacle to be presented to the prince had occupied some time. The whole of the plaza was unpaved, and in the centre an immense amphitheatre was constructed, with seats rising by gradations to the height of the lower balconies of the surrounding habitations, and capable of accommodating an incredible number of spectators. Covered with crimson cloth, and otherwise ornamented, these seats presented a very splendid appearance, and were so arranged that each occupant could command a perfect view of the performance. The arena destined for the courses was deeply sanded, and was surrounded by double barriers, between which ran a circular passage. There were two grand entrances to the arena, and a gate, with folding-doors painted red, which communicated with the toril, or dens where the bulls were shut up.

The day dawned most auspiciously. The sun

shone brightly, the bells rang joyously, martial music was heard, and bands of mounted archers and arquebusiers in their glittering accoutrements were seen proceeding from the palace to the Plaza Mayor, and though it was certain that the heat would be excessive, no one cared for that inconvenience, provided they could obtain a sight of the grand spectacle. Thousands of manolos and manolas in their gayest attire trooped off to the scene of the approaching show. Vehicles of all kinds thronged the streets, and gaily-dressed majos, mounted on Andalusian horses, and having their majas seated behind them, forced their way through the crowd of foot passengers. Through the different gates countrymen, bestriding gaily-caparisoned mules, rode into the city, each having a carbine or a trabuco at his saddle-bow. From the Calle Mayor, from the Calle de Toledo, from the Calle de Atocha, living streams poured into the Plaza Mayor, so that even at an early hour the square was filled to overflowing.

Towards noon, when every seat in the immense amphitheatre was occupied by cavaliers in velvet mantles of varied hues, or by lovely dames habited on this occasion in honour of the prince in white silk, and draped in white mantillas of the richest lace; when nothing was seen but the fluttering of

plumes and the waving of fans; when every balcony of every house in each of the four façades was occupied by spectators; when roofs and chimneys were invaded, and no point or pinnacle commanding a view was neglected — the coup d'œil of the plaza was magnificent in the extreme. More than a hundred thousand spectators were present, and as all the male portion of the crowd was dressed in lively colours, the effect was very striking. All the balconies were decorated — generally with velvets of various hues, arras, or carpets, but in some cases with cloth of gold and silver — and these decorations added prodigiously to the effect.

The grand ornament of the plaza, however, and that on which the universal gaze rested, was a magnificent gilt scaffold reared over the arches of the Panaderia, and covered with cloth of gold and silver. This scaffold was divided into several partitions, separated from each other by hangings of crimson damask spotted with silver. The central gallery, reserved for the royal family, was covered in front with cloth of gold, embroidered with the royal arms of Castile and Aragon. On either side were hangings of carnation-coloured cloth of Florence woven with gold, and overhead was a canopy formed of crimson cloth of gold of Milan, very gorgeous to behold. The fauteuils and tabourets were covered

with cloth of gold and tissue, and the cushions were of the same rich stuff.

The tribune on the right of the royal gallery was assigned to the ambassadors, and the principal seat in it was occupied by the Papal Nuncio. With him were the Earl of Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, and the ambassadors of the Emperor Ferdinand II., of France, Poland, and Venice. In the tribune on the left sat Don Juan de Castilla, the corregidor of Madrid, and the three regidores. On this occasion, besides his usual train of officers, the corregidor was attended by eight pages and four lacqueys in doublets of black satin guarded with black lace, black velvet cloaks embroidered with silver caracols and gandurados, and hats adorned with black and white plumes. Next was a gallery appointed for the members of the different councils — the royal councils of Castile and Aragon sitting in front. Farther on, in the balconies, were stationed the chief grandees and highest dames of the court.

All the important personages to whom we have referred had taken their places in the tribunes, every balcony in each of the façades was thronged, and presented a most gorgeous show, every seat in the amphitheatre was occupied, the whole of the vast plaza was encumbered with gentlemen, pages, and lacqueys, clad in the sumptuous liveries of their lords, and by spectators of inferior degree, but in

very gay attire, when the first royal carriage arrived at the entrance of the Panaderia. It contained the queen, the Infanta, and the Infantes, Don Carlos and Don Fernando. Her majesty was dressed in ash-coloured silk, richly embroidered, and adorned with plates of gold, and wore a profusion of jewels. As at all public ceremonials, the Infanta appeared in her royal suitor's colours, her dress being of white satin ornamented with pearls. Don Carlos was attired in black velvet, and Don Fernando in purple.

The royal party were received by the Conde de Puebla, attended by a host of pages in liveries of orange-coloured velvet embroidered with silver lace, and were ceremoniously conducted to the gallery appointed for them, at the door of which stood Don Alfonse Eurigues and the Conde de Benavente, with other grandees. As the two royal personages came forward, attended by their train, their appearance was greeted by enthusiastic acclamations from the beholders.

The next person to enter the royal gallery was the Countess de Olivarez, and shortly afterwards a charming background was formed by the meninos and meninas, who looked like a parterre of flowers in their white and carnation-coloured satin dresses.

Scarcely had the queen and the Infanta taken their places, when fanfares of trumpets, which made

the whole plaza resound, announced the arrival of the king and his royal guest.

Philip and Charles had ridden from the palace, and were attended by a guard of superbly-equipped Burgundian archers. Arrayed in black velvet, and wearing black plumes in his hat, the king rode a cream-coloured Andalusian courser. Charles was attired in white satin, embroidered with gold, and his hat was adorned with black and white plumes. He rode the barb given him by the Duke de Cea. On their arrival at the Plaza Mayor they were received by the Conde de Olivarez and the Duke of Buckingham, attended by a large retinue composed of Spanish and English nobles, all on horseback, and were conducted to the arena. As grand master of the horse, the marshalling of the royal fête devolved upon Olivarez, but he had courteously surrendered the post to Buckingham, and contented himself with acting as the duke's assistant.

After saluting the queen and the Infanta, who had advanced to the front of the royal gallery to watch them, the king and the prince then rode slowly round the arena, and as they pursued their course, Philip explained all the arrangements to his guest, pointed out the different gates in the barriers, and showed him the entrance to the toril.

Having made the circuit of the arena, they came to a halt, and took up a position exactly opposite the

royal gallery. Charles then looked around, and was astonished at the spectacle that met his gaze. Never had he beheld so vast an assemblage — never had he witnessed such an extraordinary manifestation of enthusiasm. The whole place was in a state of excitement. From every row in the enormous amphitheatre, from every balcony in the plaza, from every window, scarfs, kerchiefs, and hats were waved. “Viva el Principe de Galles!” resounded on all sides.

Long before these demonstrations had subsided, the performers in the spectacle began to arrive.

The first to enter the arena was the Duke de Cea. He was mounted on a strong iron-grey charger, and was habited in black velvet, edged with silver of goldsmith’s work. The young duke was accompanied by Sir Richard Graham and Don Antonio Guino, both of whom were mounted on powerful horses, and wore doublets and hose of tawny velvet, embroidered with silver lace, having great tawny plumes in their hats. De Cea was preceded by fifty lacqueys in white and tawny hose, tawny doublets and cloaks, caps of wrought silver, and swords with silver scabbards.

Having made the circuit of the arena, and bent before the occupants of the royal gallery, De Cea and his two friends bowed reverentially to the king and prince, and then took up a position behind them.

While the young duke's lacqueys went out, a hundred others entered. The new comers were attired in white cloth, laced with silver, and wore black caps with white plumes. They formed part of the retinue of the Marquis de Velada, who rode into the ring with Don Pedro de Montezuma and the Duke de Maqueda. Having pursued the same course as De Cea and his friends, these personages stationed themselves behind the king and prince.

Next entered fifty lacqueys in white satin, guarded with branches of azure silk and gold. They preceded the Conde de Villamor, who was mounted on a magnificent chesnut horse — the mane and tail of the noble animal being twisted with silver. Villamor was accompanied by Don Gaspar Bonifaz and Don Christobal de Gavina.

These cavaliers having taken up their position, fifty more lacqueys appeared in dark green doublets, embroidered with silver caracols, having black hats and plumes. This troop belonged to Don Geronimo de Medanilla, who was accompanied by the Conde de Cantillana and Don Diego Zurate.

More lacqueys followed in liveries equally gorgeous — more cavaliers made the circuit of the arena, and took up their position with the others — until at last the number of combatants was complete.

The inspection over, Philip and Charles quitted

the arena, dismounted at the entrance of the Panaderia, and shortly afterwards appeared in the royal gallery, where Charles was assigned a place between the queen and the Infanta.

No sooner had the king and the prince taken their seats, than trumpets were sounded, and the whole troop of cavaliers, who remained in the ring, formed themselves into two lines, and, marshalled by Buckingham and Olivarez, rode towards the royal tribune, saluted the king, and then quitting the arena, drew up in an enclosure reserved for them outside the barriers.

Another procession now entered the arena by an opposite gate. At its head rode four alguacils, mounted on strong black horses, and accoutred in black doublets and cloaks, large funnel-topped boots, and broad-leaved sombreros with black plumes. They were followed by a large troop of toreros, chulos, and banderilleros.

All the latter were young men, somewhat short of stature, but remarkably well formed, and their light active figures were displayed to the utmost advantage in gaily-embroidered doublets, fashioned in blue, rose, or green silk, flesh-coloured silk hose worked with silver, and pink satin shoes adorned with large roses. Their long black locks, taken from the brow, were fastened in a knot at the back of the neck and secured by a silken net. A small

black montera hat, ornamented with spangles and tinsel, completed their costume. The chulos, whose business it was to irritate and distract the bulls, carried under their arms capas or mantles of various-coloured stuffs. The procession was closed by a sort of hurdle, dragged along by four mules, decorated with crimson tufts and plumes, and having bells attached to their harness. This equipage was destined to remove the carcasses of the horses and bulls killed in the courses.

The procession having paid homage to the king by kneeling before the royal gallery, passed on, and the greater part went out and stationed themselves in the partition between the barriers. A dozen chulos, half as many banderilleros, and a single torero, were left in the ring.

Again the trumpets sounded, and three cavaliers, each armed with a lance, rode into the arena. These were the Duke de Cea, Don Antonio Guino, and Sir Richard Graham. They posted themselves on the right of the toril, which faced the royal gallery, at intervals of twenty yards from each other, the young duke being nearest the toril, and Graham farthest from it.

While these dispositions were made, the vast assemblage became perfectly silent. Expectation was so highly raised that scarcely a breath was drawn.

Amid the silence, the alguacils rode towards the

tribune occupied by the corregidor, and, baring their heads, besought permission to open the toril.

In response, a large key, ornamented by ribands, was flung to them by Don Juan de Castilla. It was caught in a hat, and delivered to a varlet of the ring, who ran with it towards the toril, while the alguacils galloped out of the arena as fast as they could, amid the shouts and jeers of the beholders.

Trumpets were then blown, the red gates of the toril were thrown wide open, and quick as lightning a bull rushed forth. At the moment of his entrance a little flag was planted in his shoulder, bearing the device of the Duke de Cea. He was a splendid animal brought from Andalusia, where the best bulls are bred, and soon gave proof of courage and activity. His colour was a shining black; his horns sharp and crescent-shaped; his eyes fierce and wild in expression. For a moment he seemed bewildered by the shouts that greeted his appearance, and the thousands of faces that met his gaze, but after a short hesitation, during which he bellowed savagely, and lashed his sides with his tail, he precipitated himself on De Cea, who, lance in hand, awaited his attack.

At a bull-fight of the present day, the horse of the picador, generally a wretched animal destined to the knacker if he should survive the conflict, has a thick bandage over the eyes to prevent him from perceiving the onset of the bull. Moreover, the pi-

cador's legs are sheathed in iron greaves covered with leather. But at the period of which we write, when nobles and cavaliers were picadors, no such precautions were taken, and as good horses were used in the bull-ring as in the tilt-yard.

Thus De Cea's noble steed, though conscious of his danger, remained motionless until the bull was close upon him, when, obedient to the will of his rider, he turned slightly aside, and the furious brute, missing his mark, rushed on, not, however, unscathed, for he received the point of De Cea's lance deep in his shoulder. The shaft of the lance was broken by the blow, but another weapon was instantly handed by a chulo to the duke, who expected the bull to renew the attack.

Instead of wheeling round, however, the beast went on, and, again couching his head, made a dash at Don Antonio Guino. This time better success attended the charge than had done that on the young duke. Shivering the lance with which Don Antonio struck him, the furious brute gored the horse deeply in the chest, rendering the animal unmanageable, and while he was struggling with Don Antonio, the bull returned to the attack, and this time plunging his horns into the horse's body near the girths, lifted him and his rider completely from the ground.

This feat was greatly applauded by the specta-

tors, and cries resounded on all sides of "Bravo toro! buen toro! gentil toro!"

Amid these shouts, Don Antonio disengaged himself from his steed, from whom the blood poured forth in torrents, and vaulted over the barriers. At the same time, the chulos advanced towards the bull and fluttered their mantles before him to distract his attention from the fallen steed, on whom he was still venting his rage. His attention being thus diverted, the bull turned to his new opponents, who, having succeeded in drawing him towards the centre of the ring, took to flight, and made for the barriers.

All escaped but one, who slipped and fell, and his fate seemed certain. A thrill of horror pervaded the assemblage as the bull, who had rushed past him, turned and lowered his blood-stained horns. But deliverance was at hand. Ere the vengeful monster could transfix him, his own side was pierced by the lance of Graham, who had dashed to the assistance of the prostrate chulo. Bellowing savagely, the bull turned upon his new foe, but Graham avoided the attack, and, profiting by the opportunity, the chulo sprang to his feet and cleared the barrier.

Meanwhile, the bull wheeled round and again assaulted Graham, but he had now met with an antagonist whom it seemed impossible to touch. Rapid

as were the monster's movements, frequently and furiously as he charged, he did not once succeed in touching Graham, so admirably did the young man manœuvre his steed.

In this manner the bull was conducted to that part of the arena which was nearest to the royal gallery, when the animal, fatigued by his ineffectual attempts, desisted from further attack, and stood still, staring in angry wonderment at his opponent.

Charmed by the remarkable skill displayed by the young man, the spectators applauded loudly, and a thousand voices called out, "Viva el Cabalero Ingles! viva Don Ricardo! viva!"

Apparently indifferent to the bull, Graham bowed in reply to these acclamations. But he had scarcely made the movement, when the bull, who had been stealthily watching him, again made a charge. This time the horns of the brute slightly grazed the side of the horse, who snorted with pain, but remained perfectly under his rider's control.

Thinking the conflict had endured long enough, Graham resolved to put an end to it. With this design, he flung away his lance, and drew his sword. Allowing the bull to make two more charges, he avoided them dexterously, but on the next assault he plunged his rapier up to the hilt between the animal's shoulders.

Pierced to the heart, with the sword still stick-

ing in his body, and blood mingled with foam gushing from his mouth and nostrils, the bull dropped on his knees before his conqueror.

The whole amphitheatre rung with plaudits, and shouts again resounded on every side of "Viva el Caballero Ingles!"

At that moment of triumph, Graham glanced anxiously round, and at last his eye caught that of Doña Casilda.

The trumpets then sounded the morte, and presently afterwards the four gaily-caparisoned mules, with the hurdle attached to them, galloped into the arena, their bells jingling merrily, and bore off the carcase of the bull.

While this took place, De Cea rode up to his friend, and warmly congratulated him on his brilliant achievement.

"You have begun well, amigo," cried the young duke.

"Oh, this is nothing. I hope to do better," rejoined Graham. "We must have another bull."

"You must control your ardour for a while," laughed De Cea. "The next course belongs to the Conde de Villamor. But perhaps he will let us join him. If so, we will have a couple of bulls. Here he comes. I will ask him," he added, as Villamor, accompanied by Don Gaspar Bonifaz and Don Christobal, rode into the arena.

X.

The Second Course.

FROM the moment of Graham's entrance into the arena to that when the bull dropped at his feet, he had been anxiously watched by Doña Casilda, who was seated in a balcony of the amphitheatre, on the right of the toril. With her were the Conde de Saldana, Doña Flor, and Don Pompeo. In the same balcony, immediately behind her young mistress, sat Rose, who, being attired in black silk, draped in a mantilla, and provided with a fan, looked like a Spanish doncella. Throughout the course, Rose's dark eyes had been fixed upon Graham, and she followed his every movement with an interest quite as keen as that felt by Doña Casilda.

With the exception of Don Pompeo, all the party were in raptures at the address displayed by Graham, and the conde was loud in his praises.

"I can scarcely believe this is the first time Don Ricardo has encountered a bull," he said. "He has all the skill and coolness of an experienced picador."

"The Duke de Cea must have taken great pains with him," remarked Doña Flor.

"I think he is quite as skilful as the duke," said Casilda.

"That is not saying much in his praise," re-

joined Don Pompeo. "De Cea did nothing in the course we have just witnessed."

"We shall see what he does in the next," observed Doña Flor.

"Is Don Ricardo about to take part in the next course?" asked Casilda, eagerly.

"So it appears," replied Don Pompeo. "He and De Cea seem loth to leave the ring." And he muttered, "May they never quit it with life!"

While this ill wish was breathed, Doña Casilda detached a knot of ribands from her breast, and, giving it to Rose, said, in an under tone,

"Let this be conveyed instantly to Don Ricardo. Say it comes from me."

"The señora shall be obeyed," replied Rose.

And quickly descending to the barriers, she addressed herself to a chulo, who took the breast-knot, and, vaulting into the ring, hastened towards Graham.

Meanwhile, the arena had been prepared for a second course. As soon as the bull had been disposed of, the mules returned with their equipage, and carried off Don Antonio Guino's horse, which by this time was dead. A torero also brought back the sword with which Graham had despatched the bull, and delivered it to its owner. At the same time all evidences of the recent conflict were carefully obliterated by the varlets of the ring.

On learning from De Cea that he and Graham desired to join in the second course, the Conde de Villamor at once courteously assented, but it being necessary to ask permission of the corregidor, a messenger was despatched to ascertain the pleasure of that important personage; and it was during this interval, and while the five cavaliers were drawn up opposite the corregidor's tribune, that the chulo ran towards Graham, and, holding out the breast-knot to him, exclaimed:

"Hist! Señor don Ricardo! — this favour is from Doña Casilda."

"From Doña Casilda! Then it must be for me," cried Don Christobal, snatching the breast-knot from the chulo.

"Nay, señor, I am certain it was meant for the English caballero," cried the chulo. "The doncella told me so."

"Concern yourself no further, friend," rejoined Don Christobal, sternly. "I am Doña Casilda's betrothed."

On this, the chulo retired.

"The favour was unquestionably intended for me, señor," said Graham to Don Christobal. "You will not be uncourteous enough to detain it."

Don Christobal made no reply, but proceeded to fasten the breast-knot on his doublet.

At this juncture, the corregidor, to whom the

message had just been delivered, advanced to the front of his tribune, and bowed to the group of cavaliers, to intimate that he assented to their request. The five champions immediately dispersed themselves, each taking up a position close to the inner barrier.

Though burning with indignation, Graham was obliged to constrain himself for the moment, but he promised himself speedy revenge. As he glanced towards the balcony where Casilda was seated, he perceived from her looks that she was aware of what had occurred, and his rage was increased by the smile of triumph that curled Don Christobal's lips.

"He shall not wear that breast-knot long," he thought.

Meantime, the trumpets again sounded, the gates of the toril were thrown open, and a second bull dashed into the arena.

Like his predecessor, he was for a moment blinded by the flood of sunshine that burst upon him, and stopped, bewildered by the shouts and by the presence of so many spectators. He was a powerful-looking beast, dun in colour, with sharp white horns, tipped with black, and bent upwards. His mouth was covered with foam, and his eyes flashed fire.

After gazing round the ring and bellowing

furiously, the bull hurled himself on the Conde de Villamor, who stood nearest him on the left. Villamor avoided the charge, and pierced him in the shoulder with his lance, but the wound only served to irritate him, for he returned to the attack with such celerity, that the conde found it impossible to get out of the way, and, before he could draw his sword, the bull was upon him.

Down went horse and man, overthrown by the terrible shock, and for a moment the conde seemed in great danger, as his steed had fallen upon him, and he could not extricate himself.

An immense cry rose from the assemblage, mingled with some shouts of "Bravo toro!"

Luckily for Villamor, the bull expended his fury upon the horse, plunging his horns repeatedly into the prostrate animal, and while the vengeful beast was thus engaged, a troop of chulos came up, and by fluttering their capas, soon succeeded in luring him towards the centre of the ring.

As soon as the bull was gone, some of the assistants leaped over the inner barrier and assisted Villamor to rise. On regaining his feet he called for another horse, but at that very moment his strength deserted him, and but for assistance he must have fallen. While he was being carried out of the arena, the bull caught sight of him, and immediately quitting the chulos, who strove in vain to

arrest him, dashed at the party. Scared by the animal's approach, the men left the conde and fled.

A cry of horror arose from the assemblage, who thought that Villamor was lost. Even the king manifested the greatest anxiety. But swift as was the bull, De Cea was swifter. As the animal, with lowered horns, and vengeance in his flaming eye, was within a yard of Villamor, who was lying prostrate on the ground, the lance of the young duke smote him deeply on the shoulder. The bull then wheeled round and turned his rage on his new assailant, and while he was thus engaged, Villamor was carried safely out of the arena, to the great relief of the beholders.

All eyes were now fixed upon De Cea, who, by executing several rapid voltes and demi-voltes, avoided the furious charges of the bull, and in this manner led the animal to that part of the arena nearest the royal gallery.

At this moment, in obedience to the corregidor, who waved his kerchief from his tribune, the trumpets were sounded, the gates of the toril again flew open, and a third bull came instantly forth, bearing between his shoulders a little flag marked with the device of Don Christobal.

The animal's appearance excited high expectations. In colour he was of a reddish brown, with well-set horns sharp as poniards, eyes that burnt

like flaming coals, a curled foretop, and an immense dewlap. Lashing himself with his tail, and pawing the ground, he bellowed fiercely. The roar made his presence known to the bull on the opposite side of the ring, who instantly answered by a similar note of defiance, and the twain would have rushed at each other if they had not been prevented.

Aided by some of the chulos, De Cea kept his bull in check, and held him in play as before, while the toro roxo, as he was styled by the spectators, found his course barred by the three picadors. Despising these obstacles, however, he dashed against Don Christobal, who was nearest to him, and, regardless of the wound he received, went on, and assailed Don Gaspar Bonifaz, from whom he got a second thrust in the shoulder. Then, abandoning his original design of seeking out the other bull, he wheeled round with inconceivable rapidity, and again dashed at Don Gaspar, ripping up the side of the horse, and wounding the cavalier himself in the thigh.

But this was not all. Without a pause in his furious career, he turned his horns upon Don Christobal, and in another moment horse and rider were rolling upon the ground.

Graham saw what had occurred. Had he waited for another moment, the horns of the infuriated monster would have delivered him from his rival.

But a nobler impulse swayed him. Without hesitation he charged the bull, whose head was lowered to strike Don Christobal, and smote the savage brute between the shoulders with such force that more than a third of the lance disappeared, while the bull, who had received his death-wound, fell within a foot of the horse he had slain.

Thunders of applause greeted this gallant action. The spectators appeared frenzied with delight. "Viva el Caballero Ingles! Viva Don Ricardo! Viva!" again resounded on all sides. As the hero of the moment glanced towards the balcony, where the mistress of his heart was seated, she waved her kerchief enthusiastically to him, and that was reward enough for his prowess.

Meanwhile, a troop of chulos had flown to Don Christobal's assistance, but before they came up he had extricated himself from his horse. His first business was to proffer thanks to his deliverer, but he did so with an ill grace, and could not conceal his mortification.

"I owe my life to you, Don Ricardo," he said, "and must try to pay off the debt, if I can."

"Give me that breast-knot of ribands, and I shall be satisfied. You can pay it off at once," rejoined Graham.

"We are quits, then," said Don Christobal, &c.

taching the ornament from his doublet, and presenting it to his rival.

Glancing towards the balcony where Casilda was seated, Graham saw she was watching him, and pressing the favour to his lips, he fastened it on his breast.

Just at this moment a torero came up, bearing a small flag which he had just unhooked from the neck of the bull.

"This trophy belongs to you, Señor Don Ricardo," he said to Graham. "Is there any lady present to whom you desire to send it? If so, I will see it conveyed to her."

"I thank you for your courtesy, friend," replied Graham, to whom the torero's features seemed familiar. "The lady to whom I would present it is seated in yonder balcony, on the left of the toril."

"I see," replied the torero, glancing in the direction pointed out. "It is Doña Casilda, daughter of the Conde de Saldana. She is looking towards us, and understands your design. The flag shall be sent to her at once."

He then bowed towards the balcony, so as to intimate his intention to Doña Casilda, and was about to depart, when Graham stopped him.

"Stay, friend," he said. "Methinks we have met before."

"True, señor," replied the torero, bowing; "we have met before — in the Somosierra."

"Ha! is it possible?" exclaimed Graham, a light suddenly flashing upon him.

The torero, however, did not tarry for further questioning, but ran to the barriers, where he quickly found a page, who at once mounted to the balcony.

"From Don Ricardo, señora," said the page, as he delivered the trophy to Doña Casilda.

"From Don Christobal you mean," remarked Don Pompeo. "The flag bears his device."

"That may be, señor," replied the page, "but it was the English caballero who killed the bull. The flag, therefore, belongs to him, and he has sent it to the señora."

"I am much beholden to Don Ricardo, and to you for bringing it," said Casilda, smiling with pride and pleasure.

His errand fulfilled, the page bowed and departed.

"You should not have accepted the flag, Casilda," remarked Don Pompeo. "Don Christobal will be offended, and with good reason. Such a mark of attention from Don Ricardo is highly improper. All eyes are upon you, and the incident is sure to be commented upon, and to Don Christobal's disadvantage. I advise you to throw the flag away."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied Casilda. "Don Christobal deserves to be mortified for his want of skill. He has allowed a mere novice to eclipse him. But for Don Ricardo, he would have been killed."

"Perhaps you would not have been sorry if he had," remarked Don Pompeo, spitefully.

At this moment a great shout from the spectators announced that De Cea had just despatched the other bull. Doña Flor was enchanted, and applauded enthusiastically, much to her husband's annoyance. But his ill humour was increased when, shortly afterwards, the page reappeared, bringing a bunch of blue and red ribands, taken from the neck of the bull which had just been slain, and presented it to Doña Flor.

"From the Duke de Cea," said the page.

"I thank him for his attention," she replied, with a gracious smile. "I have now got my trophy," she added, turning to Casilda.

"You do not mean to wear it," whispered the other. "Don Pompeo looks as black as thunder."

"If he chooses to make himself ridiculous in public I cannot help it," returned Doña Flor. "I shall not be deterred by his cross looks from wearing the token."

The course being ended, the Duke de Cea and Graham left the ring to other champions. As they

rode forth together, they paused for a moment, and bowed gracefully to the balcony, in which Doña Flor and her sister were seated.

The acclamations that attended Graham's departure showed how highly his skill and gallantry were appreciated by the spectators.

XI.

How Archie was tossed by a Bull.

MEANWHILE, preparations were expeditiously made for another course. The dead bulls and horses were carried off by the mules as before, and the marks of the conflict effaced. The only one of the champions left in the ring who had figured in the last encounter, was Don Christobal. He had been provided with a fresh horse, and seemed eager to efface his late defeat. The three picadors who joined him in the arena were the Marquis de Velada, Don Pedro de Montezuma, and the Duke de Maqueda.

As soon as the champions had posted themselves, the trumpets sounded, and a bull rushed forth, successively assailing Velada and Montezuma, and receiving thrusts from both. In the third assault he was slain by Don Christobal, who thus redeemed his credit, and gained the applauses he so eagerly coveted.

Quickly was the carcass removed — quickly came another bull into the arena. But the new comer not evincing an immediate disposition to attack the picadors, he was drawn to the centre of the ring by the chulos, and there his fury was roused to the proper pitch by the banderilleros, who planted their rustling darts in his shoulders.

Among the troop engaged with the bull was one personage who had no previous experience of such performances, but who trusted, nevertheless, to his activity to extricate himself from peril. This was Archie, the court fool. He had so earnestly besought Buckingham to allow him to enter the arena, that the duke consented, though with considerable reluctance.

Archie's motley garb, which presented a striking contrast to the gay and glittering attire of the chulos, drew immediate attention to him, and the movements of his grotesque little figure were watched with lively curiosity by the spectators, who were much diverted by his appearance and manner. Even the occupants of the royal gallery watched him. Charles had first remarked him, and called the king's attention to him, and some uneasiness was felt for his safety. Archie had been provided with a crimson capa, which he fluttered in the eyes of the bull, and up to a certain time no misadventure befel him. But after the fury of the bull had been thoroughly

roused by the banderilleros, matters began to assume a different complexion, and being warned by his companions, Archie thought it prudent to take to his heels. Unluckily, the bull, after dispersing his other tormentors, who also took to flight, turned, and perceiving the flying jester, dashed after him.

It now became a question whether Archie could reach the barrier before his swift and terrible foe could come up with him. So headlong was the dash of the bull that escape seemed barely possible. Charles gave up the jester for lost, and thought how deeply King James would regret him.

However, Archie went on. A few more paces and he would be safe. The barrier was close at hand. The shouts of the spectators, encouraging him to go on, rang in his ears. But above these shouts he heard the bull, who was now close upon him. He made a desperate spring forward, but failed to reach the barrier, and fell.

A universal thrill of horror pervaded the spectators as the bull lowered his head. Nowhere was this feeling experienced in a higher degree than in the royal gallery. The next moment the jester was tossed to a great height in the air, and all who looked on expected, on his descent, to see him, transfixed by the sharp-pointed horns waiting to receive him.

But he was not destined to perish thus misad-

ably. Succour arrived at that supreme moment. A capa flung by a dexterous hand over the head of the bull caused him to turn his head, and the movement saved the jester, who alighted on the ground without any material injury, for the bull, in tossing him, had luckily not touched him with his horns. So little, indeed, was he hurt, that before the bull could shake the capa from his head Archie had vaulted over the barrier.

A general shout hailed his escape.

XII.

The Masked Picador.

ATTENTION was then fixed upon the torero to whom Archie had been indebted for preservation. He was a very handsome young man, short of stature, but remarkably well made, and his symmetrical limbs were displayed to the greatest advantage in his glittering garb. His complexion was dark, and his eyes black and keen, and he looked a model of grace and agility. He was, in fact, the person in whom Graham had just before recognised an acquaintance. It being quite evident that he was fully able to cope with the bull, the Marquis de Velada and Don Pedro, who had ridden to the rescue, held aloof.

As soon as the bull had freed his horns from the

capa, and could distinguish his adversary, who was gazing steadily at him at a short distance, he uttered a short angry roar, and prepared for attack. The torero was only armed with a slight rapier, but he was perfectly undismayed. Indeed, he seemed to regard his furious antagonist with contempt. When the bull dashed at him, he stepped nimbly aside, and the enraged animal passed by, but returned almost instantly, making charge after charge, but without the slightest effect. Charmed with the extraordinary grace displayed by the torero, the spectators applauded loudly. At last, at a sign from the corregidor, the conflict was brought to a close. Pierced to the heart by the keen rapier, the bull dropped at his conqueror's feet. Bowing gracefully to the royal gallery, the torero vaulted over the barrier and disappeared.

"Who is that man?" said Philip to the Conde de Puebla, who was standing behind his chair.

"I know not, sire," replied the conde, "but I will inquire and inform your majesty."

"I shall be glad to learn his name, that I may reward him," remarked Charles. "He has rendered me a great service in rescuing the unlucky jester. Had Archie perished, my royal father would have been inconsolable."

"I will find him out, and let your highness

know," said the Conde de Puebla. And he left the gallery for the purpose.

When he returned shortly afterwards, he said, "I am unable at present to satisfy your majesty's curiosity. The torero has disappeared, and no one can tell who he is."

"Strange! his features seem familiar to me," remarked Charles, thoughtfully.

"Make further inquiries, my lord," said Philip. "We must be satisfied."

At this moment, the attention of the royal party was attracted by a singular occurrence. Two bulls had been introduced into the ring, both remarkably active animals. They were aware of each other's presence, but were kept at different sides of the arena by the chulos and banderillos, who had divided themselves into two parties.

While pursuing the flying bands of their tormentors, both bulls, as if animated by a kindred spirit, leaped the inner barrier almost simultaneously, alighting in the passage which encircled the arena. In addition to the chulos, who had just gained this place of refuge, there were many other persons in the passage at the moment, but all these saved themselves by vaulting into the arena, leaving the space clear for the bulls, who rushed against each other with such prodigious force and fury that both were killed by the shock.

This occurrence, strange and unexpected as it was, only momentarily interrupted the proceedings. The carcases were removed from the passage, and the arena was cleared for another course.

The champions now occupying the ground were Don Geronimo de Medanilla, the Conde de Cantilana, and Don Diego Zurate. With them was a fourth cavalier, who attracted far more curiosity than his companions, from the circumstance of his features being concealed by a black mask. Everybody wondered who he was, but no one could tell. But be he whom he might, it was evident he was a consummate horseman. He was mounted on a black Andalusian barb, which, though full of fire and spirit, obeyed his slightest movement, and he sat his steed with remarkable grace. His small but symmetrical person was attired in white silk, lined with azure and embroidered with silver, and he wore white and blue plumes in his hat. Never had a more graceful cavalier been seen in the bull-ring, and from the moment of his appearance he enlisted all female sympathies in his behalf.

"Who is he? — why is he masked?" resounded on all sides.

But, as we have said, no satisfactory answer could be given to the inquiries. He must be known to the marshals of the fête, or he would not have been allowed entrance into the bull-ring. Not only

among the general assemblage, but even in the royal gallery, curiosity was excited as to his name and title, for everybody believed him to be a hidalgo.

“Who is that masked picador?” inquired the king of the Conde de Puebla.

“I am unable to satisfy your majesty at this moment,” replied the conde, “but the marshals have just sent word that an explanation will be given at the conclusion of the course.”

“Enough. We will wait till then,” replied Philip.

The four picadors having posted themselves, the trumpets sounded, and a bull rushed forth from the toril singling out Don Geronimo, by whom he was killed. Another bull was then let loose, and another after him. Both these were slain on opposite sides of the arena, and nearly at the same moment — the first by the Conde de Cantillana, and the other by Don Diego Zurate. Don Diego had a narrow escape. The horns of the bull with whom he was engaged, and whom he had smitten on the foretop with his lance, struck the troussequin at the hinder bow of his high Moorish saddle, splitting the wood into shivers, but luckily doing him no injury. A better directed stroke, however, was fatal to the steed, but Don Diego, though dismounted, avenged himself upon his foe.

Hitherto the masked picador had taken little part in the conflict. All he had done was to prick one of the bulls with his lance, as the animal passed him, but he had not stirred from his post. His quietude was so marked, that some of the spectators, who on his appearance had augured great things of him, set him down as a fainéant cavalier. But others, who judged him more accurately, felt sure he was only biding his time. And so it proved.

While the dead bulls and horses were removed, all the picadors, with one exception, quitted the arena, and the chulos and banderilleros went out. The sole occupant of the ring was now the masked cavalier, and it being seen from these arrangements that he was determined to have no assistance, the resolve at once restored him to the good opinion of the spectators.

As the trumpets sounded he careered round the arena, and tranquilly continued his course even when the bull issued from the toril. A more savage-looking monster could not have been selected. Not one of his predecessors had presented an appearance so formidable. His eyes seemed on flame, and his roar shook the arena. As he remained pawing the ground, bellowing and lashing his sides, he was a terrible picture. But the cavalier seemed not to heed him, but careered gaily on.

The bull allowed him to make half the circuit of the arena, and then dashed in pursuit. The cavalier had now got the opportunity he desired of displaying the marvellous qualities of his steed. With the greatest apparent ease he eluded every attack of the bull, led him round the ring, suddenly turning when too closely pressed, and in this manner drew him to the centre of the arena, where he compelled him, by his own active movements, to go through an extraordinary series of performances, such as no previous bull had exhibited, and which elicited plaudits from all parts of the amphitheatre.

Despite all his efforts, the bull was unable to touch either horse or rider, though he himself received repeated thrusts on either shoulder. At last, the savage nature of the animal seemed subdued. Declining to continue the contest, he quitted his opponent, and trotted off to the farther part of the ring, bedewing the sand with gore. Contrary to expectation, the cavalier did not follow him, but called for another bull. In response to the demand the trumpets sounded, and the toril sent forth another combatant. The sight of the new comer reawakened the fury of the dejected bull, and seemed at once to restore his strength and activity.

Answering the roar of defiance, which he sup-

posed to be addressed to him, he prepared for a new conflict. But it was no part of the cavalier's design that the bulls should engage each other. His aim was to draw their joint attack on himself, and in this he completely succeeded, to the infinite surprise and admiration of the beholders, who had never witnessed such a spectacle before, and who rewarded his prowess with thunders of applause. It seemed a miracle that he could escape destruction from two such active and fierce antagonists, and more than once the spectators gave him up for lost, and thought he was struck. But owing to his address, and the marvellous quickness of his steed, he was never even touched. So hair-breadth were his escapes, that many superstitious persons thought he must possess a charm. The bulls might have thought so too, if they could have reasoned, for he seemed to disappear as they dashed at him. So rapid were his movements, that the closest watchers could scarcely follow them. At one moment the bulls and cavalier seemed heaped together; the next, they were apart. It was an extraordinary sight, and calculated to excite the spectators to the highest pitch. "Bravo! bravo! Viva la Mascara!" resounded on all sides. It was impossible such strife could be of long duration, but how the conflict was to be terminated without mishap to the cavalier, none could conjecture.

The encounter took place in the very centre of the arena, and was confined to this spot while it lasted. A small circle might have been drawn round the combatants, and this seemed to grow narrower and narrower, until one of the bulls suddenly dropped, pierced to the heart by the lance of the horseman. The other bull did not survive his comrade many seconds, but fell in his turn with a rapier planted between his shoulders. This double victory, achieved with such apparent ease, astounded the beholders, and a perfect hurricane of applause arose. The cavalier, who, as well as his steed, was perfectly uninjured, remained motionless between the carcasses of his prostrate foes.

"Unmask! unmask!" cried a thousand voices.

The cavalier complied, flung his mask to the ground, and disclosed the features of a very handsome young man of swarthy complexion.

When the curiosity of the spectators was thus gratified, there was a strange murmur among the crowd, and various exclamations were heard.

At last these confused sounds took a distinct shape, and several voices called out:

"'Tis El Cortejo!"

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon the assemblage by this announcement. A storm of discordant noises arose, but applause soon predominated. Amid all this disturbance, the object

of it remained stationary. But he glanced anxiously towards the royal gallery, and as it was evident that he expected some decision thence, all eyes were turned in the same direction. It could then be distinctly perceived that Charles was addressing the king, and it was also quite apparent, from the looks of his majesty, which were ever and anon directed quickly towards El Cortejo, that he formed the subject of the prince's address.

The observers augured well from the king's manner. Little doubt could be entertained that he had assented to the prince's proposition, whatever it might be, and that this related to El Cortejo was equally clear. The profound interest felt in what was going on had calmed down the excitement of the spectators, and a universal silence prevailed.

Meantime, the corregidor had quitted his tribune, and was soon afterwards seen to enter the royal gallery, when he was called forward by the king.

After a short discussion, during which evident reference was made to the solitary occupant of the arena, who composedly awaited his sentence, a sheet of paper and a pen were handed to his majesty, who, without quitting his seat, wrote a few lines and signed them. This done, he gave the order to Charles, who likewise signed it. The corregidor received the document from the prince, and

making a profound obeisance, quitted the royal gallery.

When this matter had been disposed of, the king and the prince entered into explanations with the queen and the Infanta, and the smiling countenances of the party left no doubt as to the decision arrived at. Nevertheless, no one ventured, even by an exclamation, to anticipate the royal decree.

The assemblage, however, was not held long in suspense. Amid loud fanfares of trumpets the corregidor rode into the arena, accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham and the Conde de Olivarez, both of whom were on horseback, and followed by an officer in the royal livery, mounted on a magnificently caparisoned charger. Having advanced to within a short distance of *El Cortejo*, the corregidor and those with him halted, and the trumpets ceasing their clangour at the same moment, the officer in a loud voice, distinctly heard by the whole assemblage, made the following proclamation:

“Be it known to all present, that his Most Serene Highness the Prince of Wales, in exercise of the power granted to him by our sovereign lord and master the king, has been graciously pleased to confer a full and free pardon upon the person known as *El Cortejo*, now before you.”

Here the officer was interrupted by an irrepressible outburst of acclamations, and shouts resounded of "Dios guarde al Rey! Viva el nobil Principe de Galles. Viva! viva!"

Placing his hand upon his breast, and with a look expressive of the deepest gratitude, El Cortejo bowed towards the royal gallery, inclining himself twice to the saddle-bow.

While this took place, the torero, whom Graham had recognised, entered the arena, and stationed himself near El Cortejo, but his presence was almost unnoticed, until attention was called to him by the officer, who, as soon as silence was restored, thus proceeded:

"His Most Serene Highness the Prince has also been graciously pleased to pardon Don Gonzalez de Montalban, lately known as Lieutenant Roque, and who is now before you."

Hereupon the torero, whom we must henceforth recognise as Don Gonzalez, stepped forward, and bowed twice profoundly to the royal gallery, in token of his gratitude.

A hundred voices then cried out, "Who is El Cortejo?"

"Ay, who is he?" added a hundred others.

"Be silent, and you shall learn," said the corregidor, in a voice that dominated all the others, and called immediate attention to the speaker.

"Don Flores de Cuenca," he continued, addressing El Cortejo, "be pleased to come forward."

Thus enjoined, El Cortejo placed his hat on his head, to intimate that he was a grandee, and pushed his steed towards him.

"Don Flores," pursued the corregidor, "a full pardon having been accorded you by his Highness the Prince of Wales, his majesty, out of his infinite goodness and leniency, and in consideration of your youth and of extenuating circumstances that have been represented to him, is willing to forget your offences and delinquencies, and in the hope and belief of your amendment, he restores to you your title of Conde de Valverde, together with your forfeited estates. Here is the warrant," he added, delivering to him the paper signed by the king.

"I humbly thank his majesty and the prince," replied Valverde, in tones of deep emotion. "My future career shall prove me not unworthy of their goodness. If I live, I will redeem the errors of my youth."

An immense shout showed the sympathy of the spectators.

"Accept my congratulations, count," said Buckingham, offering him his hand, which the other

gratefully took; "when we first met, I had no suspicion of your real rank."

"There I had the advantage of your grace," replied Valverde, "for I ascertained your rank and that of the illustrious personage with you. I owe my restoration to you. Had it not been for the opportunity you have afforded me of appearing before his majesty and the prince, I should not have received a pardon, or regained my title and estates. Be assured of my eternal gratitude."

"You give me more thanks than are my due, marquis," said Buckingham. "You are more indebted to the Conde de Gondomar than to me. He acquainted the prince and myself with your real history, and it was from what he said of you that I determined to give you a chance of retrieving your tarnished character."

"You will have no cause to regret what you have done, my lord duke," said Valverde. "From this moment I am an altered man."

"You shall not want an opportunity of distinction, since you seek it, count," said Olivarez.

"That is all I desire," cried Valverde. "If your excellency will send me and Don Gonzale de Montalban to Mexico, we will not return till we have won renown."

"You shall have your wish," replied Olivarez. "You shall start to-morrow."

As Valverde bowed his thanks the trumpets sounded, and the party rode out of the arena.

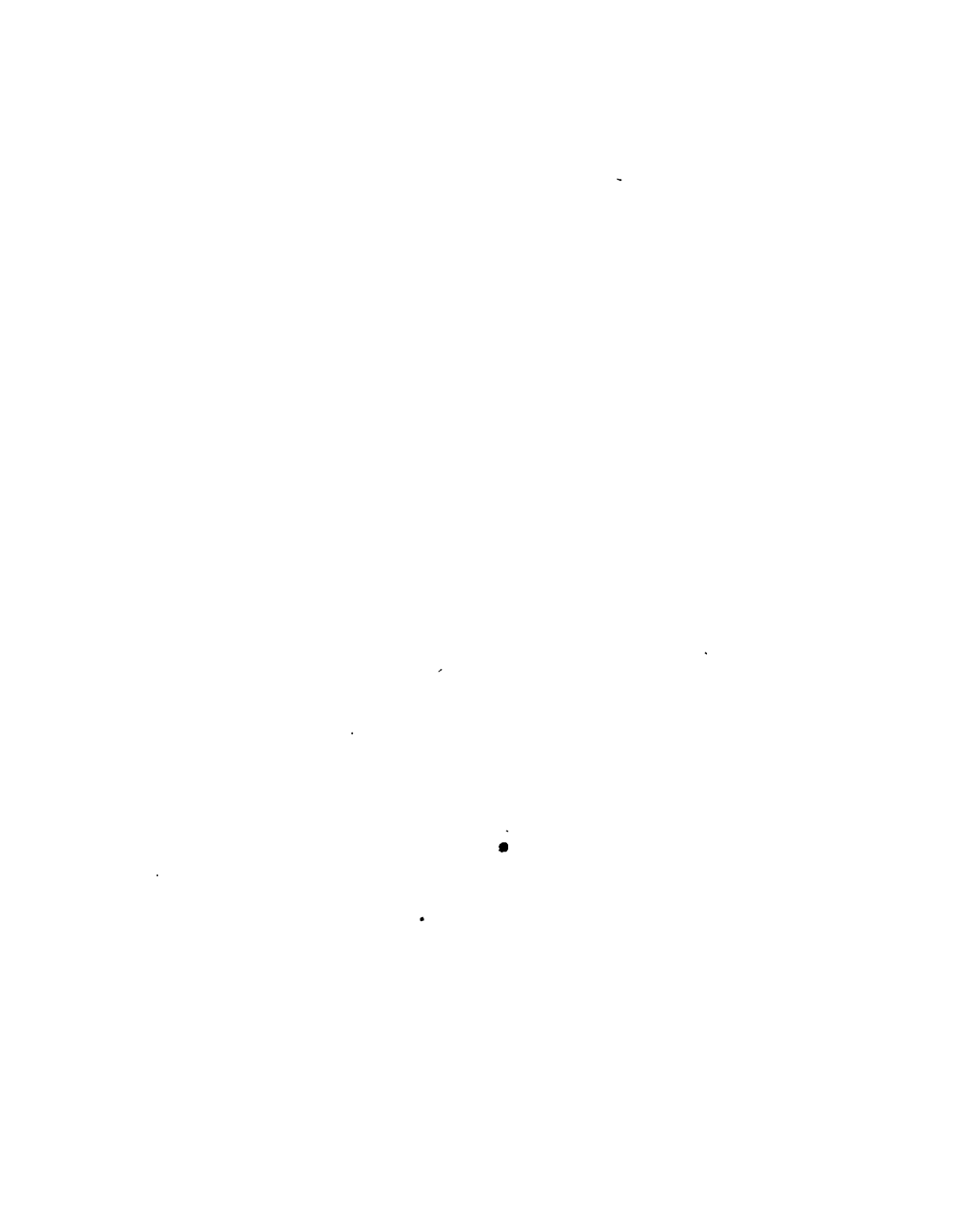
With the strange occurrence just narrated, which excited the assemblage in an extraordinary manner, all interest in the bull-fight seemed to cease, and it would have been well if the spectacle could then have terminated, for only a languid interest was felt in what followed. There were more courses, but they only seemed like a repetition of those that had preceded them, and there was no achievement in any degree comparable to that of the Marquis de Valverde.

The fête was terminated by a grand procession of all the combatants, who marched round the arena, and saluted the royal gallery as they passed before it. Graham was much applauded, but the loudest and longest cheers were given to the Conde de Valverde, who was adjudged the hero of the day.

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

BOOK V.

EL BUEN RETIRO.



I.

How the Nuncio strove to convert Charles.

NEARLY six months had elapsed since the arrival of Charles and Buckingham in Madrid, and not only was the object of the expedition unattained, but the prince and his favourite were less hopeful of its accomplishment than they had been at first. The prince's ardour had not been cooled by the delay, but he continued as passionately attached to the Infanta as ever. Neither had anything occurred to make him doubt the sincerity of the king's intentions towards him. Philip, as we have already stated, had conceived a real regard for his expected brother-in-law, and was quite as anxious for the completion of the match as Charles himself; but Olivares was determined it never should take place unless Charles became a proselyte. And he did not despair of such a result, though Charles, when closely pressed, always avoided coming to a decision.

At last, the Papal Nuncio undertook to bring the prince to reason. He sought an interview with Charles, and told him he came to express the lively satisfaction felt by the Pope at the disposition evinced by his highness to enter into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church.

“I am enjoined to read this letter to you, prince,” he added, producing a despatch. “It is written by his Holiness, with his own hand. ‘We have commanded,’ he says, ‘to make continually most humble prayers to the Father of Light, that he would be pleased to put the Prince of Wales, as a fair flower of Christendom, and the only hope of Great Britain, in possession of that most noble heritage, which his ancestors have purchased for him, to defend the authority of the Sovereign High Priest, and to fight against the monsters of Heresy.’ In these prayers,” pursued the Nuncio, “I most devoutly join, and I earnestly exhort your highness, as well for your temporal prosperity as for your spiritual weal, to conform to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff. If your highness will solemnly promise to renounce your errors and embrace the Roman Catholic faith, and will also engage to use your utmost endeavours to bring over the court and kingdom of England to that persuasion, as the representative of his Holiness, I am able to inform you that the dispensation to the match shall no longer be withheld, the hand of the Infanta and her immense dowry shall be ensured to you, and the support of Spain, under any difficulties that may arise, shall be guaranteed. In making this offer, I speak not only for the Sovereign Pontiff, whose envoy and representative I am, but for his most Catholic Majesty Philip IV. It is now for your

highness to decide. Prudence and policy alike dictate the course you ought to take. You love the Infanta Maria, who is a princess in all respects worthy of you. But there can be no real union where the creeds of husband and wife are opposed. Misery and aversion must spring from such a match. What must the Infanta's feelings be if she were wedded to one whom she believes doomed to perdition? I pray your highness to reflect upon this point. The more dearly she loves you — and she *does* love you dearly, I know — the deeper would be her solicitude."

"I have thought of this," observed Charles, gravely, "and I am aware that the consideration has been impressed upon the Infanta by Padre Ambrosio, but I conclude that this obstacle would be removed by the dispensation."

"The dispensation would only apply to the Infanta, and would have no efficacy in regard to your highness," replied the Nuncio. "To say that your union could possibly be happy if you continue in heresy, would be to deceive you. Better abandon the match altogether than persist in it, if you persist in error. Such is my opinion — such is the opinion of his Holiness."

"But his Holiness has not refused the dispensation," remarked Charles.

"True; but he cannot overcome his reluctance.

to grant it," said the Nuncio, "and the cause of his hesitation must be evident. He has the welfare of his religion at heart. He desires to regard your highness as a friend, but at present he can only look upon you as an enemy. You have it in your power, by a word, to change his sentiments — to obtain all you seek — and secure felicity here and hereafter."

"Even if I were disposed to accede to the proposition, I could not do so without consulting the king my father," replied Charles.

"The king your father is blinded by heresy, and cannot see the truth," said the Nuncio. "It is not needful to consult him. His Holiness will be a father to you — the best of fathers, because he will preserve your soul. Oh! my son," he added, rising, and speaking with almost apostolical fervour, "hesitate not to throw yourself into our arms! We will receive you as the prodigal was received by his father. We will evoke Heaven's blessings upon you — blessings that will be denied if you continue in heresy and sin. We will make ready the bride — who, otherwise, will never be yours — and prepare the marriage feast. We will establish you firmly in your kingdom, and protect you against all enemies. Be ours, and all is won!"

"I must have further time for reflection," said Charles.

"Hesitation at such a moment is worse than weakness, it is sinful," rejoined the Nuncio. "Be not swayed by the advice of evil counsellors. Listen to those who have your real welfare at heart, and who are clothed with wisdom and authority. As Heaven's vicegerent, whom I represent, I promise you happiness, the bride you have chosen, and a kingdom here and hereafter. Can you hesitate?"

"I must — I must," said Charles.

"Let me implore you not to reject my offer, my dear son," said the Nuncio. "Let me go forth and say to the king, who loves you as a brother, that it is done — that your conversion is completed — and I shall fill his heart with gladness. Let me tell the Infanta that every obstacle to her union with you is removed, and all her anxiety will disappear. Let me inform his Holiness that his lost son has returned, and there will be jubilation at Rome. Let me announce to this faithful people that their hopes have been crowned with success, and songs of rejoicing will be heard throughout the land. Shall I go forth and do this?"

"No," replied Charles. "I am not prepared to change my faith."

"Have my arguments failed to convince your highness?" demanded the Nuncio, with a look of disappointment.

"I acknowledge the force of all you have said," rejoined Charles. "But I cannot now decide."

"Do not let the propitious moment pass, or it may never return," said the Nuncio, somewhat sternly. "Your heart is now softened, but it may become callous. You now see clearly, but your sight may be darkened. You have an evil counsellor, prince, who thwarts your good intentions. His pride and presumption are adverse to your best interests. Shake off his pernicious influence. He is utterly unworthy of the favour you bestow upon him. I know that the Duke of Buckingham is violently opposed to your meditated faith — but set him at nought, and, if need be, dismiss him."

Just as the words were uttered the door opened, and Buckingham stood before them.

"Methought I heard my name pronounced," he said, bowing in a supercilious manner to the Nuncio, who coldly returned his salutation.

"You were not deceived, my lord duke," rejoined the Nuncio. "Your name was upon my lips at the moment, and I hope you heard what I said of you."

"So you have not numbered me among the Pope's adherents, I shall be perfectly content," retorted Buckingham.

"His Holiness would rather have you as an enemy than an ally, for you injure every cause you

desire to serve," rejoined the Nuncio, sternly. "I have warned his highness the prince against your baneful counsels, and I repeat the warning in your presence. I have urged him to dismiss you —"

"You have dared to do this?" cried Buckingham, transported with sudden fury.

"I have dared to do it, my lord," rejoined the Nuncio, in a taunting tone, calculated to exasperate Buckingham still further, "and I will add, that no step that could be taken by his highness would be more gratifying to the king and his court."

"You presume too much on your sacred office!" exclaimed Buckingham, whose rage had become uncontrollable.

"Calm yourself, my lord," interposed Charles.

"Nay, let him go on," said the Nuncio. "I am glad he should display himself in his true colours. If the duke will venture to comport himself thus towards me, the representative of the Sovereign Pontiff, what treatment could the Infanta expect from him! I have warned your highness, it will be my duty also to warn his majesty against the danger which his sister will incur."

"You fear me, and seek to get rid of me," cried Buckingham, "but you will fail in your design."

"No, my lord, it is the prince who fears you, not I," rejoined the Nuncio, with calm sternness; "but I

trust he will shake off the yoke to which he has too long submitted."

With an obeisance to Charles, but without noticing Buckingham, he then quitted the cabinet.

"What have you done?" cried Charles, as soon as the Nuncio was gone. "You have destroyed all my plans by your intemperate conduct."

"Better it should be thus! — better the match should be broken off — than your highness should be subjugated by this Papal envoy. We have been scandalously treated. Let us depart at once."

"You may go, Steenie, since you are bent upon leaving, but I shall stay," said Charles.

"What! remain without me!" cried Buckingham, in amazement.

"Most certainly," rejoined Charles, seating himself quietly. "I have no intention whatever of going without the Infanta. I love her, and mean to make her mine, whatever time or trouble it may cost to accomplish my purpose."

"Well, since your highness is resolved to stay, I must needs stay too," rejoined Buckingham.

"But if you *do* stay, you must be upon your good behaviour, Steenie," said Charles. "You have contrived to offend all the court, and now you have made an enemy of the Nuncio."

"The king your father will approve of what I have done," said Buckingham.

"Not when he hears my version of the story, and learns my design, which you have all but defeated," said the prince. "Unless you will promise to put due constraint upon yourself, I must order your departure."

"Order my departure!" exclaimed Buckingham, in extremity of surprise. "By Heaven! I begin to believe that these wily priests have produced some effect upon you."

"They have taught me dissimulation, which it seems impossible that you can practise, Steenie."

"No, thank Heaven! I cannot," cried Buckingham. "I must speak out."

"Therefore you are better away," said Charles; "and I advise you to make preparations for immediate departure."

"Nothing will give me more satisfaction, provided your highness will accompany me."

"I remain," said Charles, firmly.

"Then so do I," cried Buckingham.

At this moment an usher announced the Earl of Bristol and the Conde de Gondomar.

Buckingham cordially saluted the Spanish minister, but scarcely deigned to notice Bristol.

"I am sent by his majesty," said Gondomar, bowing profoundly to Charles, "to entreat your highness's attendance at a meeting of the state council to-morrow."

"And mine also, I presume, count?" remarked Buckingham.

Gondomar was evidently embarrassed by the question, and hesitated to reply.

"What am I to understand by your silence, count?" demanded Buckingham.

"Simply that you are not invited," remarked Bristol.

"Ha! then the meeting can be of no importance," cried Buckingham.

"The Conde de Gondomar will tell your grace differently," rejoined Bristol.

"You will judge of its importance when I state that certain articles proposed to be added to the marriage-treaty will be discussed," said Gondomar.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Buckingham. "Are you invited, my lord?" he added, turning sharply to Bristol.

"I am invited," replied the other. "And so is Sir Walter Aston."

"Then either I shall be present at the conference, or the prince will not attend it," said Buckingham.

"What has happened, count?" said Charles to Gondomar.

"Speak out, count," said Buckingham, seeing that Gondomar hesitated. "Fear not to offend me."

"To be plain, then, your grace has incurred the

king's displeasure," returned Gondomar. "Some words that have passed between you and the Nuncio have been repeated to his majesty, and have excited his anger."

"I am sorry for it," said Charles, with a look of annoyance. "But I have but one course to take. A slight to the Duke of Buckingham is a slight to me. I cannot attend the meeting without his grace."

"I will convey your highness's answer to his majesty," said Gondomar.

"Beseech your highness to consider well before you take this step," said Bristol. "It will lead to unpleasant consequences."

"It can only lead to a postponement of the meeting," said Buckingham. "Deliver the message, count."

"No," rejoined Gondomar, after a moment's reflection. "I will rather take upon myself the responsibility of inviting your grace. Come with the prince to the meeting. If you will adopt a conciliatory tone, all may be arranged."

"You hear, Steenie," said Charles; "it is on this understanding that I agree to take you."

Shortly afterwards Gondomar and Bristol departed, leaving Charles and his favourite alone together.

II.

In what way Buckingham was humiliated by Olivarez.

NEXT day, at the hour appointed, Charles, attended by Buckingham and the two ambassadors, repaired to the council-chamber.

Philip had not yet arrived, but the members of the council — all nobles of the highest rank — with the Conde de Olivarez, had assembled. With the exception of the Conde de Gondomar, they all manifested great surprise on seeing Buckingham enter with the prince, and the Conde-Duque received him with constrained courtesy. Buckingham, however, did not manifest the slightest embarrassment at the reception accorded him, but comported himself with his customary arrogance.

Ere many minutes the king made his appearance, and after saluting Charles with his wonted cordiality, turned to Buckingham, whose obeisance he had not deigned to notice, and said, coldly:

“I did not expect to find your grace here.”

“My presence appeared indispensable, sire,” rejoined Buckingham, “as I understood that certain new articles connected with the marriage-treaty were to be discussed.”

“I could not have attended without the duke, sire,” said Charles.

“I should have thought your highness might

have fully confided in the wisdom and experience of the Earl of Bristol," said Philip, scarcely able to conceal his displeasure. "Since the Duke of Buckingham has taken part in these consultations, frequent disputes and interruptions have occurred, which I hoped might be avoided on the present occasion."

"Sire," said Buckingham, "I trust I shall not offend your majesty if I say that I have a right to be present at these councils."

"Ha! since your grace takes that tone," said Philip, sharply, "I must inquire by what title you claim to be admitted to the meetings?"

"I claim it, sire, as the guardian and adviser of his highness the Prince of Wales," replied Buckingham, proudly, "who has been entrusted to me by his royal father. I claim it also as first minister of the English cabinet, without whose full approval this marriage-treaty cannot be concluded. And let me state at once, in order to save time and prevent disputes, which I dislike as much as your majesty, that I object to add any new articles to the treaty, and, on the prince's part, decline to discuss them. The treaty must be taken as it stands. If additions are constantly to be made to it, it can never be completed."

"Hold, my lord duke! you proceed too fast," interposed Olivarez. "We cannot submit to dicta-

tion, especially from one who has no right to a seat in our councils. Had the Earl of Bristol objected to these articles, we should have listened to him with respect, but you have no title whatever to a hearing. If you have a commission from his Majesty King James, produce it. If you have credentials from the English council, lay them before us. But if you have neither commission nor credentials, be silent."

"Why was not this demand made before, my lord?" said Buckingham. "I have attended many councils without exception being taken to my presence."

"Consideration for his highness the prince has induced us thus far to tolerate your interference, my lord duke," rejoined Olivarez; "but our patience is now exhausted. In the Earl of Bristol and Sir Walter Aston his highness has able and judicious counsellors, in whom he may confide. He can dispense with your grace."

"Then my place is no longer here," said Buckingham, making a movement to depart, and glancing at the prince as if he expected him to withdraw likewise.

But Charles took no notice of the signal.

"A moment, my lord duke," said Philip, in a tone that recalled the haughty favourite to his senses, and made him sensible of his indiscretion;

“a word, before you quit our presence — never to re-enter it. Your appearance at our councils has been irregular and unwarranted, and we have brooked language from you to which we are wholly unaccustomed, but we have borne it out of love to the prince. Now, mark well what I say. You yourself are the main hindrance to the fulfilment of the proposed alliance between the Infanta and the Prince of Wales. Even if every other obstacle were removed, and all we could desire agreed to, the position you occupy in regard to his highness would present an insurmountable difficulty.”

“How so, sire?” demanded Buckingham.

“Your influence over the prince would be prejudicial to my sister,” replied Philip. “I cannot expose her to the risk.”

“We entirely approve of your majesty’s determination,” said the whole of the council, with the exception of Gondomar.

“Sire,” exclaimed Buckingham, “I know not why your majesty has conceived this ill opinion of me, nor can I do more than conjecture who has poisoned your mind, but this I know, that the Infanta — should the prince be fortunate enough to obtain her hand — will not have a servant more faithful and devoted than myself. Thus much I dare avouch, and I will maintain it with my life, that not one of your grantees — not even the

Conde-Duque — could serve her more faithfully than I would. The prince, who knows my sentiments, will confirm what I say. In retiring from your councils, in which, it appears, I have improperly intruded, I must entreat your majesty's forgiveness, and the forgiveness of these noble lords, for any hasty expressions I have used. I should indeed regret it, if I could be supposed wanting in due respect to your majesty, or in consideration to them."

"Sire," said Charles, rising, and speaking with great dignity, "it would be grievous at this juncture, when there is every prospect of the negotiation being speedily concluded, that an interruption should occur. I am certain that his grace of Buckingham, as indeed he has assured your majesty, is sensible that he has been far too hasty, and that he will not so offend again, if he be permitted to occupy a place in the councils. As to the apprehension which your majesty has expressed in regard to the Infanta, I can without hesitation declare it to be groundless. The Duke of Buckingham would be utterly unworthy of the favour he enjoys from the king my father — he would be utterly unworthy of my favour, if he could be other than a devoted servant of the Infanta. Unhappily, in arranging this treaty, religious questions have been chiefly discussed, and these discussions have not always been conducted, on the

duke's part, with befitting temper, but I trust all difficulties may now be reconciled, so that no further disputes can arise. We will make every concession possible, and your majesty will not ask more than we can fairly yield."

"I trust we may come to an entire agreement, prince," said the king, with a certain significance. "The Duke of Buckingham must now be convinced that the violent opposition he has hitherto offered is injudicious and injurious; and in the persuasion that he will henceforward adopt a different course, we will overlook what has passed, and waive the objections that have been raised to his remaining in the council."

At this intimation of his majesty's pleasure, the whole of the council arose and bowed in assent. Buckingham threw himself on his knee before the king, and while kissing the hand graciously extended to him, protested unalterable devotion to his majesty and the Infanta.

As he arose and took the seat he had heretofore occupied at the council-table, and which was on the right of Charles, Olivarez observed, in a low tone to the king, "Your majesty has gained your point. He will no longer oppose the prince's conversion."

"I think not," replied Philip, in the same tone.

If they could have seen into Buckingham's heart, they would have thought otherwise. ~~At that~~

very moment he was meditating revenge for the humiliation he had undergone.

"I will break in pieces the fabric I have put together with so much trouble," he mentally ejaculated. "The match shall never take place."

III.

An Evil Omen.

WELL knowing that any attempt to induce the prince suddenly to break off the match would be vain, Buckingham carefully concealed his design and feigned to be as well disposed towards the alliance as ever.

If Charles's mind had been at ease, and if he had been allowed a certain intercourse with the Infanta, his prolonged stay at Madrid would have been delightful to him. But the uncertainty in which he was kept, the dissimulation he was compelled to practise, and the arts that were used to ensnare him, interfered with his enjoyment. The grand festivities which had celebrated his arrival had long since ceased, but everything that regal hospitality could devise was done to render his residence at the palace agreeable.

One circumstance, trifling enough in itself, confirmed him in his opinion, that whatever difficulties

he might encounter, he should eventually succeed in the object of his expedition.

It may be remembered, that on the morning after his arrival a snow-white dove alighted at the window of his chamber in the House of Seven Chimneys. Singular to relate, when he took up his abode at the royal palace, the dove followed him thither, constantly appearing each morning at the same hour, and if the window was open, as was generally the case, it entered the room and flew towards the prince's couch. So fond did he become of his little visitor, that if it had failed to appear he would have been miserable. The dove fed out of his hand, and allowed him to caress it.

Charles could not fail to mention the circumstance to the Infanta, who was greatly interested by the relation, and expressed a desire to see the dove, whereupon Charles caused the bird to be conveyed to her.

Next morning the dove appeared as usual, and flying towards the prince's couch, evidently sought to attract his attention. Charles then remarked that a blue silken thread was tied round its neck, and on further investigation discovered that a tress of light golden hair was hidden beneath the bird's wing. He could not doubt to whom he owed the gift, and pressed it rapturously to his lips. Satisfied that he had now found a means of secret correspondence

with his mistress, and determined to make trial of the dove's fidelity, he sought for a little diamond anchor which he had designed to present to the Infanta, and securing it in the same manner as the tress, carried the dove to the window, and cast it forth.

Charles watched the bird in its flight, and saw that it entered a window in the palace which he knew opened upon the Infanta's apartments.

In less than half an hour the little messenger returned, having accomplished its mission, and seemingly proud of the feat. The diamond anchor was gone, but in its place was the fragment of a kerchief, evidently just torn off, and embroidered with the letter "M," proving from whom it came.

Many a brief but tender missive was subsequently despatched by Charles to his mistress, but though the dove failed not to convey them, the prince received none in reply. Sometimes the Infanta would send her lover a flower, or other little token, but she only wrote once.

Only once! And it shall now be told how that note reached Charles.

He had been more than six months at the palace, and during the whole of that time the dove had never failed to greet him as he rose. One morning he missed his little visitant, and the circumstance filled him with sad forebodings, for it occurred at a

period when fresh obstacles had arisen to the match. For the last few days he had not seen the Infanta, who was staying at the time at the summer palace of El Buen Retiro.

When Charles awoke on the following morning, he glanced anxiously towards the open casement in the hope of beholding the dove, but it was not to be seen in the spot where it had been accustomed to alight. The same forebodings of ill which he had experienced on the previous day, assailed the prince, but with greater force. He sought to banish them by slumber, but he could not sleep, and as he raised himself in his couch, he perceived a white object lying on the floor near the window.

Springing from his couch, he flew to the spot, and then saw what had happened. The dove had been struck by a hawk, but, though mortally hurt, had escaped its pursuer, who had not dared to follow it into the room. It had fallen, as we have said, just within the casement, and was still beating the floor feebly with outspread wings. Its snowy plumage was dabbled with blood.

The wounded bird fluttered slightly in the prince's grasp as he took it gently up. But with that faint struggle all was over. The little heart had ceased to beat — the faithful messenger could serve him no more. A sharp pang shot through the prince's heart

as he gazed at the dead bird, and he now more than ever regarded the event as an evil omen.

"So, thou art gone, poor bird!" he ejaculated — "thou, who wert first to welcome me to this city, and hast ever since been my daily solace. In thought I have ever connected thee with her I love, and with my hopes of winning her, and now thou art stricken down. Poor bird, I shall miss thee sorely!"

In the pain which he felt at this catastrophe, Charles had not remarked that beneath the left wing of the dove there was a letter, secured by a silken thread.

The blood-stained condition of the letter sadly diminished the delight with which Charles welcomed it, and it was almost with a shudder that he opened it, and read as follows:

"A masked fête will be given to-morrow night at the Buen Retiro, to which you are bidden. If you desire to exchange a few words in private with one who loves you, and must ever love you, though you seem not to value her love, you will find her beside the lake, near the foot of the avenue of lindens, at midnight.

"Unless you can prove your love sincere, the meeting will be our last.

"This letter will be conveyed to you by your

little messenger, who has been kept a prisoner for a day for the purpose. Do not send an answer, as there would be great risk of discovery."

"I could not send an answer if I would," exclaimed Charles, mournfully, "for my trusty little messenger is dead. Alas! the sky, which looked so bright a short time ago, is now overcast. Why should she doubt my love? Why should she say that the meeting may be our last? But I must shake off these misgivings, which owe their origin to this sad accident. Let me look forward to a blissful interview to-morrow night. Will it be blissful?" he added, with an involuntary shudder, "Poor bird! I would thou hadst escaped!"

IV.

Showing that the Course of True Love never did run smooth.

CHARLES had just completed his toilette, which, contrary to royal usage, he performed without assistance, when Graham entered the chamber.

"What do I see?" cried the young man, aghast at the sight of the dove. "Your highness's favourite dove killed. I am right sorry for it."

"Think you the accident portends misfortune, Dick?" said Charles.

"It may signify a cross in love, especially if the poor bird brought a letter," replied Graham.

"The bird *did* bring a letter — the first I have received from the Infanta, and it may be the last I shall ever receive from her."

"Your highness attaches far too much importance to the accident," said Graham. "It is not strange that the poor dove should be killed, but it is marvellous that it should have escaped so long. Lovers, as I know from experience, are full of idle apprehensions."

"How does your own love-affair progress, Dick?"

"But indifferently," replied Graham. "The lady returns my passion, but her father has promised her to another, and, like a proud Castilian as he is, will not break his word, in spite of his daughter's tears and entreaties."

"A promise once made is sacred," remarked Charles. "In that respect, I myself am a Castilian."

"Your highness would think differently if you were circumstanced as I am," said Graham. "You would regard this rigorous adherence to a promise, which, I venture to say, ought never to have been made, as abominable obstinacy and cruelty. Doña Casilda also regards it in that light. We are both of us well-nigh distracted."

"I am sorry for you, Dick," said the prince. "You are in a sad case. But you have only to thank yourself for the trouble into which you have

got. You ought not to have fallen in love with Doña Casilda, if you knew she was engaged to another."

"But the mischief was done before I was aware of the engagement," replied Graham. "From the very moment when I first beheld Doña Casilda in the gorge of Pançorbo — your highness will remember the occasion — I fell desperately in love with her."

"That I can understand, but you ought to have conquered the passion."

"Impossible, your highness! — impossible!"

"At all events, you ought not to put yourself in the way of danger. You have been a daily visitant, as I understand, at the casa of the Conde de Saldana, and I myself have frequently seen you walking with Doña Casilda and Doña Flor in the Prado. At the great bull-fight, it was said that you appeared as a picador merely to distinguish yourself before Doña Casilda, and sent her a trophy taken from the bull you had killed."

"All this is perfectly true, your highness," replied Graham. "But the Conde de Saldana desired me to make his house my home, and I took him at his word. My chivalrous feelings prompted me to pay attention to Doña Casilda."

"It is strange that the conde should permit the continuance of your visits, now that he has found

out that you are enamoured of his daughter," observed Charles. "He is much to blame."

"If your highness pleases, I will tell you precisely what has occurred," said Graham.

"I shall be glad to hear it," replied Charles, seating himself, and assuming an attitude of attention. "I have often intended to question you on the subject."

"I shall use no disguise," said Graham; "but, to make myself quite understood, I must go back to the commencement of the affair. Your highness is aware that I was very warmly received by the Conde de Saldana, who in Castilian fashion placed his house and all in it at my disposal, and I became his daily guest. But if my visits were agreeable to the conde and his daughter, they were by no means so to Don Christobal de Gavina, to whom Doña Casilda has the misfortune to be engaged, and that personage manifested his dislike to me in many ways, but at Casilda's request I avoided an open quarrel with him. On the other hand, the old conde's regard for me increased, and I became convinced that if he had not promised his daughter to Don Christobal, he would have preferred me as a son-in-law. Casilda thought so too. She began to find it difficult to maintain a semblance of love for Don Christobal, and this increased his hatred of me, to whom he justly attributed the change in her feel-

ings. It being impossible that things could go on much longer in this way without a rupture, I came to the resolution, a few days ago, of unbosoming myself to the conde."

"I am glad to hear it," remarked Charles. "But you should have done so earlier."

"I sought an interview with him," said Graham, "and then told him that I had conceived the strongest passion for his daughter, who returned it with equal ardour, and that as neither of us could be happy apart from the other, I besought him to give me her hand. He listened to me with kindness, his countenance expressing much concern, and when I had done, he said, 'I ought to have foreseen this. I was to blame in allowing you to be so much together. I am very sorry for you both. I have a great regard for you, Don Ricardo. I love you as a son; and if I had another daughter I would give her to you. But I cannot give you Casilda.' 'Wherefore not?' I entreated. 'Because, as you know, I have promised her to Don Christobal, and my promise must be kept.' 'But you will not force her inclinations, señor conde?' I ventured to say. 'When the engagement took place, Casilda's heart was disengaged, and she readily entered into it,' he replied. 'It cannot be broken off without the consent of Don Christobal.' 'But if you sacrifice your daughter to a man she cannot love, you will con-

demn her to a life of wretchedness," I said. 'I will speak to Don Christobal, and will represent the matter to him in this light,' he said; 'and I trust I may prevail, but I own I have not much hope, for he is passionately attached to Casilda.' I thanked him warmly for his kindness, and he again promised that no efforts should be wanting on his part to accomplish the object.

"As chance would have it, Don Christobal did not make his appearance that day. So Casilda and I were kept in suspense. Next day, when I presented myself, as usual, I did not see the mistress of my heart, who was generally the first to greet me, and this circumstance filled me with sad forebodings, which were speedily verified. The conde sent for me to his library, and when I entered it, I found him alone. He looked grave and sad, and motioned me to take a chair. Without any preliminary observation, he said, 'I have seen Don Christobal, and have disguised nothing from him, but have told him exactly how matters stand — that Casilda has ceased to entertain any affection for him, and has given her heart to you. I therefore advised him to think of her no more, but to seek another bride, who would be more sensible of his merits. He was deaf to all my arguments, and peremptorily refused to liberate me from my promise.' 'But you do not intend to give Casilda to him, señor conde?'

I cried, in despair. 'You will kill us both.' 'I cannot help it,' he replied, sadly. 'Since Don Christobal claims fulfilment of my promise, I must obey. You must see Casilda no more; and, painful as it is to me to do so, I must henceforward exclude you from my house.'

"All this was said with such kindness as in some degree to mitigate the severity of his words, and I could not doubt that he himself suffered much. 'You pass a sentence worse than death upon me, señor conde,' I said; 'but before it is carried into execution, I beseech you to grant me a last interview with Casilda.' 'It will do no good,' he rejoined, 'and will only pain you both.' But I refused to leave the house till he complied, and at last, fearing from my excited state that I might do some violence, he yielded — making it, however, an express condition that our parting should be brief.

"I found Casilda dissolved in tears. She flung her arms round me, and declared she would not be separated from me. Between love and anxiety I was almost distracted, and scarce knew what to do. She declared she never would wed Don Christobal, and proposed immediate flight; but I represented to her that such a step was utterly impracticable. It was then arranged that she should elope as soon as preparations could be made — that a priest should be found to unite us — and that we

should then hurry off to Santander, and embark for England."

"What! carry her off to England!" exclaimed Charles. "You must be crazed by passion to think of such a wild scheme. But I forbid it — peremptorily forbid it — on pain of my displeasure."

"Be pleased then to tell me what I am to do," rejoined Graham. "Casilda is determined to throw herself into my arms. Does your highness advise me to wed her, and take the chance of a reconciliation with her father afterwards? That, perhaps, would be the simplest plan, and the safest. A priest can always be found to perform the marriage ceremony."

"I advise no such course; and, in fact, I disapprove of the proceeding altogether," said Charles. "I recommend you to abandon the affair."

"What! give up Casilda!" exclaimed Graham. "I would sooner put on King Philip's livery and turn Romanist than do so. I begin to think your highness cannot really love the Infanta, or you would not recommend such a course to me."

"Well, then, do what you will, since counsel is thrown away," said Charles. "But answer me one question — and answer it truly. Since the conde's house is closed to you, and Doña Casilda, no doubt, is carefully watched, what means have you of communicating with her?"

"Your highness may remember the fair damsel who was instrumental in delivering us from the brigands in the Forest of Orléans. It would be too long to tell you how Rose des Bois came to Madrid, and may suffice to state that she is now Doña Casilda's camerera, and aids me to communicate with the lady."

"I fear you are in bad hands," remarked Charles. "Rose may betray you."

"Your highness does her an injustice. Rose is a most faithful and devoted creature. I had some suspicions of her once myself, but they have wholly disappeared. She brings me a little billet-doux daily from her mistress, and takes back one in return. The last piece of intelligence I have received is, that Doña Casilda will be at the masked fête at the Buen Retiro to-morrow night. She has agreed to meet me at midnight, near the lake, at the end of the linden avenue."

"That must not be!" exclaimed Charles. "I am to meet the Infanta at the same hour and at the same place."

"That is awkward indeed," said Graham. "And by a strange chance, Doña Flor has made a similar appointment with the Duke de Cea. But of course we must give way to your highness."

"Nay, it matters not," observed Charles. "You

can withdraw when you see the Infanta appear, and bid De Cea do so likewise."

"I will not fail," replied Graham.

At this moment the door opened, and the Earl of Bristol entered the chamber.

"Good morrow, my lord," said Charles. "I am glad to see you."

"I have come thus early, because I have something to say to your highness in private," rejoined Bristol.

On hearing this, Graham bowed to the prince, and retired.

V.

How the Earl of Bristol remonstrated with the Prince.

"Now, my lord," said Charles, "we are alone, and not likely to be interrupted, even by the Duke of Buckingham."

"It was specially to avoid his grace that I came thus early," returned the earl. "I will not preface what I am about to say by any observations, but come at once to the point. I hear it on all hands — from the chief nobles of the court — from the Conde-Duque — from the king himself — that your highness is about to make a public recantation and embrace the Roman Catholic faith. Now, though I have heard this statement made by those I have

mentioned, I will not believe it unless it be confirmed from your own lips."

"Suppose the statement true," said Charles.

"But it *cannot* be true," cried Bristol. "I have denied it to all — and I will continue to deny it. I will not believe that your highness can have been persuaded to take a step so calamitous to yourself and to England — a step that will deeply afflict all your followers — and that will assuredly abridge your royal father's days, if it does not kill him outright. If, unhappily, you have yielded to the arguments of your enemies — for such they are — if you have formed any such fatal resolution — I beseech you to abandon it while there is yet time. Olivarez and the Papal Nuncio may have held out inducements to you to change your faith. But they have deluded you by false representations. Hear the truth from me. The Roman Catholic party has no power in England, and will never regain its power. What think you would be the effect in England if the news were brought that you — the heir to the throne — had become a convert to Rome? Think you the step would be approved? Think you it would be tolerated? Think you the Infanta would be welcomed as an English princess? Prince, there would be a rebellion."

"If there should be, Olivarez has said that Spain will help me to crush it," remarked Charles.

"Not all the navies and armies of Spain could crush it," rejoined Bristol. "You will forfeit your throne if you take that step. But again I say, that I cannot — I will not believe it. Oh! give me the assurance that you will abandon this fatal resolution," he added, throwing himself at the prince's feet.

"Rise, my lord," said Charles. "I will not keep you a moment longer in suspense. I ought not to have trifled with your feelings, but I desired fully to test your zeal in behalf of the Protestant faith, and I rejoice to find it so earnest. Rest certain that my principles are unshaken, and that no consideration should induce me to embrace the religion of Rome."

"Your highness's words have taken a heavy load from my breast," said Bristol. "Have I your authority to contradict the rumour?"

"Not yet," replied Charles. "I would have Olivárez and the Nuncio still entertain the belief that they can gain me over."

"To what end?" asked Bristol, uneasily.

"Be content, my lord," rejoined Charles. "I can satisfy you no further now. If I play the hypocrite it is my own affair."

"I hope your highness may not play the part too long," said Bristol. "You may be caught in a snare, if you do not take heed. You are engaged

with crafty and unscrupulous antagonists, who may prove too much for you. Empower me, I pray you, to contradict their assertions."

"I have said that it cannot be at present, my lord," rejoined Charles.

And seeing that the prince was immovable Bristol bowed and retired.

VI.

Buckingham's Plan of Vengeance.

LATER ON in the same day Charles was alone in his cabinet, when Buckingham entered, and threw himself, as was his wont, carelessly into a chair.

"I am heartily sick of Madrid!" he exclaimed, "and long to get back to England. I should think your highness must be equally weary of this dull and monotonous court life."

"I do not find the court life either dull or monotonous," replied Charles. "There is plenty of amusement, and of every variety. The fêtes are endless."

"True, but I am tired of them," rejoined Buckingham. "Our dear dad and gossip is most anxious for our return. I begin to think we have stayed away too long from him."

"I think so too, Steenie," replied Charles. "But

I do not intend to return till I can take my bride with me."

"Then you will stay till this time next year," said Buckingham, "for the marriage is no nearer completion than it was when we first arrived. Your highness has been shamefully trifled with, and you owe it to your own dignity to resent the treatment you have experienced."

"You are still smarting under the reprimand you received from the king, Steenie," said Charles.

"It is not likely that I should either forget it or forgive it," rejoined Buckingham. "But the insult to me was a far greater insult to your highness, and ought to have been resented. Since, however, you are not disposed to take offence, neither can I. But for your own sake, this negotiation must be brought to an end. If Philip continues to make further excuses for delay, say that the king your father has recalled you, and produce the letter we have just received from his majesty. There is no other way to bring the matter to an issue."

"I shall have an interview with the Infanta to-morrow night at the masked fête at the Buen Retiro," said Charles. "After that I will decide."

"Nothing will come of the interview but disappointment," said Buckingham. "For my own part, I regard the affair as completely at an end. I have long felt that the marriage is impracticable,

except upon terms which it is impossible to accept. The sooner, therefore, it is broken off the better. I will get you another bride. The Princess Henriette Marie of France will suit you better than the Infanta Maria."

"But my heart is given to Maria!" exclaimed Charles, with anguish.

"She is not worthy of you. She does not, or cannot, appreciate the depth of your regard."

"You mistake," rejoined Charles. "When she throws aside the mask which etiquette compels her to wear, you will judge her differently. I should have thought as you do if I had only seen her in public. Her nature is tender and affectionate."

"Does she love you sufficiently to change her religion for you?" said the duke.

"I do not require her to make the change," replied the prince.

"But she is not equally considerate. Nothing less than your conversion will content her."

"She is under the governance of her confessor, and acts as he dictates," replied Charles.

"If such be the case — and there can be no doubt that your highness is right — what chance have you of a favourable settlement of the affair? Either you must conform, or the prize will be withheld. That is the condition which will now be

exacted. Put the Infanta to the proof to-morrow night, when you see her at the Buen Retiro."

"I will," said Charles.

"And if she disappoints you — if she insists upon your conversion?"

"I will return to England," replied the prince.

"Promise me that," said Buckingham.

"I promise it," replied Charles, emphatically. "To-morrow night the affair shall be decided."

"I am content," replied the duke, with secret exultation. "Under these circumstances it will be a satisfaction to your highness to learn that the fleet under the command of the Earl of Rutland has arrived off Santander. I have received a despatch from the noble admiral to that effect this very morning. He hopes he may soon convey the bride to England. I have but little expectation that he will be gratified in that respect, but, at all events, he will be ready to take back your highness, and the presence of the fleet at this juncture is fortunate, for, depend upon it, Olivarez will not let you slip through his fingers, if he can help it. The Duke de Lerma warned us of his perfidy. Ever since we have been in Madrid he has been a secret enemy. He insulted me, and strove to humiliate me in the presence of the king and the state council. But I will requite him. I will lower his pride.

I have it in my power to wound him in the tenderest point, and I will not spare him."

"What are you about to do?" inquired Charles, uneasily.

"He is very jealous of his wife," replied Buckingham, "and, sooth to say, the countess is lovely enough to make any man jealous. When I first beheld her, I was fascinated by her beauty, and perhaps it was the admiration which I could not help expressing that gave me some interest in her eyes. Certain it is that she did not discourage my attentions. Perhaps she did no more than most married Spanish women do, but whatever hopes her manner towards me may have excited, I checked them."

"I am glad to hear that, at all events," observed Charles. "I feared the contrary."

"I checked them for a time," pursued the duke, "and should have checked them altogether, if Olivarez had not affronted me. I considered how I could requite him, and soon perceived that vengeance was in my power. Your highness will guess my meaning."

Charles made no reply, and Buckingham went on:

"I paid assiduous court to the countess, and soon found that she was not likely to offer any desperate resistance to the attack. In fact, she did not resist my advances, and it was quite clear that my conquest would be easily achieved."

"Had any one but yourself told me this, I would not have believed it," remarked Charles.

"To make an end of my relation," pursued Buckingham, "I have prevailed upon her to grant me an interview to-morrow night in the gardens of the Buen Retiro."

"Why there?" demanded Charles. "You will run great risk of discovery."

"I mean that the meeting *shall* be discovered — and by her husband," rejoined Buckingham.

"Such revenge is atrocious, Steenie," said Charles. "I trust you will forego the plan. If not for the Conde-Duque's sake, for that of the countess, who confides in you, do not bring disgrace upon a noble house."

"Well, I will reflect upon it," rejoined Buckingham.

Persuaded he had turned the duke from his vindictive purpose, Charles said no more on the subject, and shortly afterwards they went forth to ride in the valley of the Manzanares.

VII.

The Masked Fête at the Buen Retiro.

DESIGNED by Olivarez as a retreat for his youthful sovereign, charmingly situated, and embellished with the most refined taste, the summer palace, so

appropriately denominated El Buen Retiro, had but recently been completed at the period of our history.

In this delicious retreat Philip cast off the cares of sovereignty, and spent hours in the companionship of Lope de Vega, Calderon de la Barca, and Velasquez. And here Olivarez put off the minister, and appeared only as a courtier.

The salons of the Buen Retiro were exquisitely furnished, and adorned with the choicest paintings. The gardens were enchanting — full of terraces, fountains, bosquets, orange-groves, flower-beds, parterres, pavilions, grassy slopes, and cool retreats.

On the night of the masked fête, at which we are about to assist, the assemblage numbered all the grandees and important personages of the court, including the Nuncio and the ambassadors, together with the English nobles and gentlemen in attendance upon Charles. The dresses were gorgeous, and jewels and precious stones were by no means confined to the female portion of the assemblage. The diamonds glittering on the attire of the Duke of Buckingham outshone those of any one present. All the company were provided with black velvet masks, which they assumed or laid aside at pleasure.

Dancing took place in a superb and brilliantly-lighted salon adapted for the purpose, and the ball was opened by the king and the Infanta, who danced

a bolero, and charmed the beholders with their skill and grace. Other couples stood up at the same time, and amongst them were the Duke of Buckingham and the Countess Olivarez, who executed the dance quite as gracefully as the royal pair.

A string of magnificent pearls, worn by Buckingham, broke during the dance, and this accident — if accident it was — afforded his grace an opportunity of presenting the gems to the fair bystanders, who had picked them up — a piece of gallantry that gained him great admiration. It was remarked that the duke's manner towards the countess was singularly impassioned.

Charles took no part in the dance, but remained with the queen, seated beneath a canopy. The fandango succeeded the bolero, and the cachucha the fandango, and the rattle of the castanets was still heard merrily as ever in the ball-room, when the royal party, with a select portion of the company, proceeded to the theatre — for the Buen Retiro had its theatre, and a very charming little theatre too — where a comedy, written for the occasion by Lope de Vega, was admirably performed by the court actors.

The comedy, which was full of wit, and point, and intricate adventure, contained many allusions to the prince's chivalrous expedition to Madrid, and was loudly applauded; and at its conclusion the

author received the compliments of the king and Charles, and was more substantially gratified by a purse of gold from the latter.

After the performance, the banqueting-chamber was thrown open, and a sumptuous repast served, of which the principal guests partook; but the royal party, including Charles, supped in a small oval chamber in private.

Supper over, the company went forth into the gardens, which were illuminated, and the trees being hung with lamps of various hues, looked as if they bore such fruit as was grown in the orchards of the Hesperides. The night was magnificent, the moon being at the full, and the air perfectly calm.

About an hour before midnight there was a grand display of fireworks, which could be seen by the crowds assembled in the Prado; and after this the majority of the company returned to the ball-room, or to the banqueting-chamber, while a few, who preferred the open air, continued in the gardens.

All the marble seats along the terraces had occupants, and couples were moving slowly across the soft sward, listening, it may be, to the nightingales. However, we shall not pry into their discourse, but follow two graceful-looking señoras, who were proceeding down the long avenue of linden-trees leading to the lake. They moved too quickly to notice the magical effect produced by the coloured lamps on

the numerous statues lining the walk, and though they looked back occasionally, they did not pause till they reached the borders of the lake.

Here all was tranquil. The trees were gilded by the moonbeams, and the surface of the little lake glittered like silver. The calmness and serenity of the scene offered a strong contrast to the revel they had just quitted.

Shortly after the arrival of the two señoras, the dip of oars was heard in the water, and a boat was seen to issue from a little creek at the farther end of the lake, and make its way towards them. The bark was propelled by a couple of rowers, and two cavaliers were seated in the stern, one of whom touched the chords of a guitar, and chanted a serenade in a low sweet voice, as he came along.

In another minute the bark reached the spot where Doña Casilda and Doña Flor were stationed — for it will have been conjectured, we presume, that they were the masked señoras — and De Cea and Graham leaped ashore. A few exclamations of delight were uttered, and then De Cea besought Doña Flor to embark with him, nor did it require much persuasion to induce her to assent. Before they entered the boat, it was agreed that the others should join them at the farther end of the lake.

Thus freighted, the boat cut its way through the

moonlit water, but the tinkling of the guitar was no more heard.

Meanwhile, Graham and Casilda moved slowly on, keeping near the margin of the pool.

Lovers' discourse is idle, and scarcely worth repeating.

"Have you ever such lovely nights as this in England, Ricardo?" inquired Casilda. "Do the nightingales sing as sweetly in your groves? Is the air as balmy? And does the moon shine as brightly?"

"You will judge," replied Graham. "If you do not like my country, you shall come back to Spain."

"Ah! I shall be happy with you anywhere, Ricardo," she replied. "But if I am to be yours, my flight must not be long delayed, or it will be impossible. I shall be forced into a marriage with Don Christobal."

"Nay, that shall never be," cried Graham. "You are mine — mine only, Casilda — and no hated rival shall rob me of my treasure. I yesterday acquainted the prince with my plan, but he disapproves it."

"But you will not be guided by him — you will not abandon me?" cried Casilda. "If you do, I shall die of despair."

"Fear nothing; I have no such thought. Even if I incur the prince's displeasure, and forfeit the

Duke of Buckingham's favour, I will not swerve from my faith to you! Be prepared to-morrow night. I will scale the garden wall at midnight. You shall join me, and then ——”

“Hush!” she exclaimed, with a gesture of caution; adding, in a low voice, “We are watched. There is some one among the trees.”

“I can perceive no one,” rejoined Graham, glancing in the direction indicated. “But it may be the prince. He was to meet the Infanta near the lake about this hour.”

“You reassure me,” she rejoined. “I feared it might be Don Christobal, and that he had overheard what we said. And yet that is not likely either, for we left him in the ball-room, about to join the dance.”

In another moment they were buried in the shade of some trees that grew near the water, and as Graham cast a look backwards, he perceived two figures near the foot of the avenue, and drew Casilda's attention to them.

“Look!” he cried, “I was right. Yonder are the prince and the Infanta.”

VIII.

The Meeting by the Lake.

AFTER the display of fireworks, Charles remained in the garden with the Earl of Bristol, Lord Kensington, and some other English nobles, and then, giving them to understand that he desired to be alone for a while, he left them, and walked down the avenue to the lake.

So beauteous was the scene, so steeped in calmness, that an immediate effect was produced upon his feelings, and almost forgetting why he had come thither, he fell into a delicious and dreamy reverie, from which he was roused by light footsteps near him. Turning at the sound, he perceived two female figures, both wrapped in dark silk mantles and masked.

As he advanced towards them, one of the ladies retired, and remained standing at a little distance.

"I have run great risk in keeping my appointment with you, prince," said the Infanta, as she removed her mask, "and I cannot stay more than a few minutes."

"Oh, say not so, Maria!" cried Charles. "This is a spot where hours might be spent in loving converse."

"You talk of hours as if time were at my command," she replied. "Were I to remain long, my

absence from the palace would infallibly be discovered, and as it is, I am full of apprehension. But I must not waste time, for I have much to say to you."

"I am all attention. Say on, sweet princess. Your voice is more charming to me than the song of the nightingales."

"What I have to say may not please you," she rejoined; "but all my future happiness depends upon your answer to the question I am about to put to you. You can guess it. You know the subject nearest my heart. You know towards what end my prayers are directed. Has Heaven enlightened you and moved your breast? Are you prepared to recant your errors, and embrace the true faith?"

A profound sigh was Charles's sole response.

"I must have an answer," she replied, withdrawing the hand he had taken.

"You say our meeting must necessarily be brief, Maria," he remarked. "Do not let us mar our happiness by this discussion. It is out of character with the spot — with the serene beauty of the night. Let us devote the few minutes we have together to love — to tender thoughts."

"But I cannot continue to love you, unless you will give me an assurance that you will conform," said the Infanta. "Why this hesitation? You have led me to suppose you would become a convert."

"Forgive the deception I have practised, Maria. It is love that has made me play the dissembler."

"Then you have deluded me with false hopes? You never intended to change your faith? Prince, such conduct is unworthy of you. But you cannot honourably retreat. I must hold you to your promise. Either you must become a convert, or our engagement is at an end. You must come to an immediate decision."

"But why drive matters to this fearful extremity, Maria?"

"The extremity is as fearful to me as to you, Charles," she rejoined. "Listen to what I say. I have solemnly promised the Nuncio, in the presence of my confessor, never to wed a heretic."

"Why did you do this, Maria?" cried Charles, in a voice of anguish.

"Because I believed you would become a convert. And you will, Charles — you will?" she exclaimed.

"I cannot," he rejoined.

"Then you are resolved to renounce me. You love me not!"

"Oh! say not so, Maria. I love you too well. But I cannot change my faith."

"Will not my entreaties move you? Can you be insensible to my anguish? Padre Ambrosio

and the Nuncio will question me to-morrow. What shall I say to them? May I hold out any hopes?"

"None! — none!" he replied. "I have gone too far already."

"This, then, is your decision?" she cried.

"It is my final decision," he rejoined, sadly but firmly.

"All, then, is over!" said Maria. "My dream of happiness is ended!"

"Why should it be so?" cried Charles. "The Nuncio, if he pleases, can absolve you from your promise, however solemnly made — and perchance it was extorted from you. The king your brother and his cabinet do not impose any such terms. I have agreed to all their conditions."

"Be not deceived, Charles," she replied, sadly. "The marriage-treaty will never be concluded unless you concede this point. Such is Philip's secret resolution. He and Olivarez fully calculate upon your compliance. And you yourself have led them into the belief."

"I see my error now," rejoined Charles. "But it may be retrieved."

"No, that is impossible, if you persist in your resolution," she said.

A sudden interruption to their discourse was offered at this juncture by the lady in attendance

upon the Infanta, who, stepping quickly towards them, warned them that some one was at hand.

Scarcely had they resumed their masks, when two cavaliers emerged from the bosquet, and marched quickly up to them. As neither of these personages was masked, and their features were revealed by the bright moonlight, Charles knew them to be Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

"What means this interruption, señores?" he said, haughtily. "Retire."

"Not without these ladies," rejoined Don Christobal.

"You are mistaken, señor," said Charles. "Do you not see that you cause the ladies great alarm?"

"Possibly we may — but that cannot be helped," rejoined Don Christobal. "We are sorry to interrupt your tête-à-tête, but you must be pleased to excuse us. Come with me, señora!" he cried, seizing the Infanta's hand.

"And do you come with me, madam," added Don Pompeo, taking the hand of the other lady.

"Let go your hand instantly, señor, or by Heaven, you will repent it!" cried Charles. "This lady desires to stay with me."

"That is easily to be perceived," rejoined Don Christobal. "But I do not intend she shall. Come along, madam!"

Don Pompeo at the same time tried to force away the other lady.

"Unhand me instantly, señor, I command you," cried the Infanta to Don Christobal.

"Not yet," he replied, with a laugh.

Finding there was no alternative, Maria took off her mask, and her features being thus revealed to the astonished Don Christobal, he instantly recognised the Infanta, and falling on his knee before her, he exclaimed, "Pardon, princess, pardon! I took you for Doña Casilda."

"And I took you for my wife, Doña Flor," cried Don Pompeo to the other lady, who had likewise unmasked.

"You have been guilty of a great indiscretion, señores," said Charles, taking off his vizard. "But you must forget whom you have seen — do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied both cavaliers addressed; "your highness need have no apprehension."

At this moment voices were heard, and several persons were seen coming down the avenue.

"It is the king, with the Conde-Duque," said Don Christobal.

"The king! oh, Heavens! I shall be discovered," cried the Infanta.

"Take refuge in yonder pavilion, princess," said

Don Christobal. "His majesty is not likely to visit it."

"Shall I go there?" said Maria to her attendant.

"No, no," replied the lady; "anywhere but there. Princess, you must not go."

"She must, or she will be discovered," cried Charles. "Try to detain the king for a moment, señores."

"We will," replied Don Christobal, hurrying off with Don Pompeo towards the avenue.

Charles then took the Infanta's hand, and would have conducted her to the pavilion, but the lady stopped them.

"Prince," she cried, "the Infanta must not enter that pavilion."

"But I will leave her at the door," rejoined Charles. "Do not hesitate, Maria."

"She shall not go, I repeat," said the lady peremptorily.

"What is to be done?" cried the Infanta. "The king will be here in a moment."

"Have no fear, princess," rejoined the lady. "The Conde-Duque is with him."

"But I dare not meet my brother. I will hide somewhere," cried the Infanta. And she flew towards a bosquet, followed by Charles and the lady.

Scarcely had they concealed themselves amongst

the shrubs, when the boat containing Graham, De Cea, and the two ladies, crossed the lake, and landed its party.

IX.

How the Tables were turned upon Buckingham.

WHEN the king got to the foot of the avenue, he stopped, and said to Olivarez,

"I must now call upon your excellency to explain why you have brought me here?"

"Accompany me to yonder pavilion, and your curiosity shall be satisfied, sire," rejoined Olivarez.

"On, then, to the pavilion!" exclaimed Philip.

But he was stopped by Don Christobal, who, placing himself in the way, said, "I pray your majesty not to enter that pavilion."

"Why not?" demanded Philip.

"Because you will interrupt a tête-à-tête."

"Between whom?" demanded the king.

"Speak out," said Olivarez.

"Between two important personages," replied Don Christobal, scarcely knowing what he said. "Your excellency will be sorry if you do not take my advice," he added significantly to the Conde-Duque. "I have good reasons for offering it."

"A word with you, Don Christobal," said the king, taking him aside. "Answer me frankly and you may prevent an unpleasant discovery."

"Such is my wish, sire," replied Don Christobal. "I am quite sure the discovery will be disagreeable to your majesty."

"But I must know who is in the pavilion."

"Excuse me, sire, I dare not inform you."

"I will have an answer," said Philip. "Is the countess there?"

"What countess, sire?"

"Do not equivocate. I ask you if the Countess Olivarez is in yonder pavilion?"

"I have reason to believe she is there, sire," replied Don Christobal, thinking she was the lady in attendance upon the Infanta.

"And the duke?"

"The duke, sire!"

"Ay, the Duke of Buckingham. You see I know it. His grace is there."

"Since your majesty will have it so, I will not presume to contradict you," replied Don Christobal, who was now completely mystified.

"Let us leave the pavilion unvisited, and return to the palace," observed the king to Olivarez: "I am satisfied with what I have just heard."

"But I am not," said the Conde-Duque. "And I must beg your majesty to go on with me."

"Nay, if you are determined, be it so," rejoined Philip.

And he proceeded with his attendants towards the pavilion.

On the way thither he encountered Graham and De Cea, and the two ladies with them.

Philip commanded the party to unmask, and the injunction being obeyed, a discovery ensued which resulted in Doña Casilda and Doña Flor being transferred to the care of Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

The king had hoped that the delay caused by this incident would give time to those within the pavilion to escape, and he was somewhat surprised when, as he approached the little structure, the door opened, and the Duke of Buckingham and a lady issued from it.

The lady was masked, but not so the duke.

The lady, whom Philip and several others felt certain was the Countess Olivarez, appeared embarrassed and uneasy, and clung to the duke's arm; but Buckingham manifested no concern. Making an obeisance to the king, he moved slowly on.

As he expected, however, he was stopped by Olivarez.

"I have a word to say to your grace," remarked the Conde-Duque.

"As many as your excellency pleases on some fitting occasion, but not now," replied Buckingham.

"All I desire to ask is whether you have been long in that pavilion?" said Olivarez.

"Your excellency is curious. Perhaps five minutes — perhaps ten — perhaps half an hour. I came there after the fireworks."

"And the lady has been with you all the time?" pursued Olivarez.

"That is a question I must really decline to answer," said Buckingham.

"Your grace is perfectly right," replied Philip.

"Stay!" cried Olivarez. "I have not yet done. I must beg the lady to unmask."

"The request is absurd," rejoined Buckingham. "Possibly her husband may be present."

"For that very reason I must insist," said Olivarez.

"I recommend you not to do so," remarked Philip. "Let them go on."

Olivarez, however, was not to be gainsaid, but called out:

"Madam, I order you to unmask."

"Hold, madam!" cried Buckingham. "Before you comply, let me say one word to his excellency."

"I will listen to no remarks," rejoined Olivarez. "Unmask, madam, unmask!"

"Save me! oh! save me!" exclaimed the lady, in piteous accents.

"I would willingly save you, but I have not the power," rejoined Buckingham. "Since his excellency commands you to unmask, you must comply."

But he will regret his folly, when he finds it is his own wife."

"What, my lord duke!" exclaimed the king. "Would you have us believe this is the Countess Olivarez?"

"I would have you believe your own eyes, sire, not my assertion," replied Buckingham, with an exulting glance at Olivarez.

But his glance of triumph changed to one of confusion as the lady withdrew her mask, disclosing a young and handsome countenance.

The features, however, were not those of the Countess Olivarez.

A derisive laugh from the Conde-Duque, in which all the beholders joined, added to Buckingham's rage and mortification.

"Why, this is better than the comedy we have just witnessed," said Philip, laughing.

"I was one of the actresses in that comedy, sire," said the lady.

"Cheated by an actress!" exclaimed Buckingham.

"Yes, my lord duke, by an actress," rejoined Olivarez. "Madam, you may retire. Your part is played."

On this, the actress resumed her mask, and withdrew.

"Lope de Vega must have given you a hint for this plot," said the king, laughing.

"No, sire, the idea is entirely my own," replied Olivarez. "This is all the retaliation I mean to take upon the Duke of Buckingham for the injury he intended me."

"You have made me supremely ridiculous, that I admit, my lord," cried Buckingham. "But it is a pity the countess is not here to join in the laugh against me."

"The countess is here," she replied, stepping forward. "Are you satisfied, my lord?" she added, removing her mask.

"Oh, madam! how you have deceived me!" cried Buckingham.

"You have deceived yourself, my lord duke," rejoined the countess. "I revealed all to my husband, and we contrived this scheme to punish your presumption. Ha! ha! ha!"

Again there was a general laugh, in which Buckingham himself thought it best to join.

"Well, I own I have been fairly taken in," he said. "The Conde-Duque may congratulate himself upon the treasure he possesses. Henceforward he can never be jealous."

"I never have been jealous, my lord," said Olivarez, sharply. "Have I, madam?"

"You have had no cause for jealousy," she replied.

"Certainly, Lope de Vega must have had a hand in this," laughed the king. "But you have

not explained how you chanced to be here, countess," he added.

"I came here with the Infanta, sire," she replied.

"What! is the Infanta here?" cried Philip.

"Yes, sire," she replied, stepping forward and unmasking.

"The comedy will never end," said Philip. "It would not surprise me to find that the prince himself has a part in it."

"Only that of spectator, sire," replied Charles, advancing.

"So you are here!" exclaimed Philip. "By Santiago! I must have some explanation."

"All shall be explained anon, and to your majesty's satisfaction," replied Olivarez. "Has the prince consented?" he added in a whisper to the Infanta.

"Alas! no!" she rejoined, in the same tone. "He refuses."

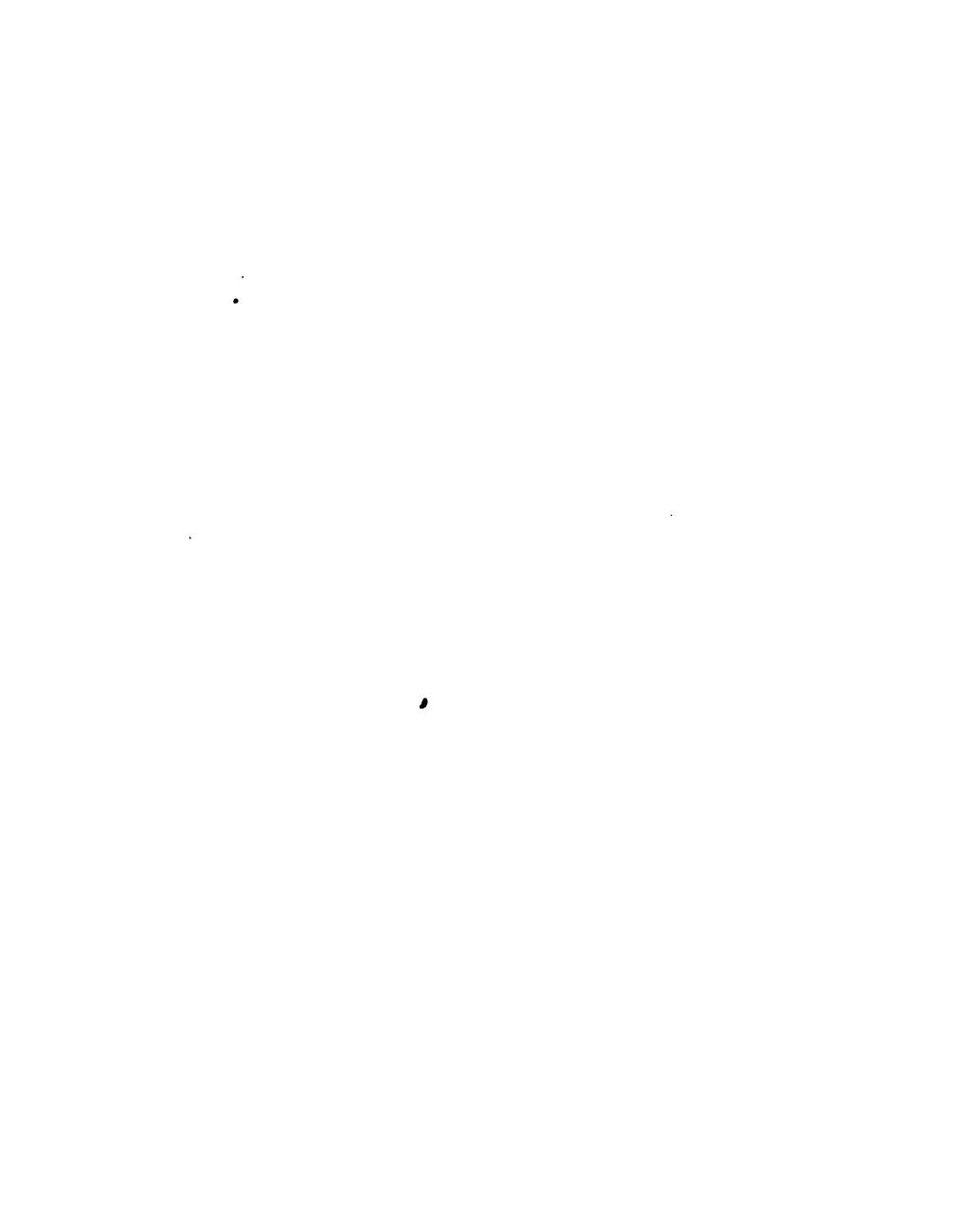
"Refuses!" exclaimed Olivarez. "He shall not quit Madrid till I have wrung consent from him. Sire, let us return to the palace. I shall have much to say to you to-morrow."

"Come with me, Maria," said Philip. "I shall not lose sight of you again."

The Infanta took the king's arm, and Charles walked on her other side, as they proceeded up the avenue to the palace.

BOOK VI.

EL JUEGO DE CANAS.



I.

How! Charles announced his Departure to the King.

On the morning after the fête at the Buen Retiro, Philip, having made an appointment with the minister, drove to the palace, and, on entering his cabinet, found Olivarez and the Nuncio waiting for him.

"Your majesty will understand why I am here," said the Nuncio. "It is to confer with you in regard to the proposed marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Infanta. Acting by my advice, the Infanta obtained last night a decisive answer from the prince. He declines to conform."

"I lament to hear it," replied Philip. "His conversion would have been a great triumph to the faith, and the failure will be a deep disappointment to his Holiness."

"We have received a temporary check, but are not defeated," observed the Nuncio.

"How! Do you still indulge a hope of success?" cried the king.

"Most assuredly," replied the Nuncio; "but we must have recourse to more stringent measures. The Conde-Duque will inform your highness that the prince designs to return to England."

"Is this so?" asked Philip.

"Yes, sire," replied Olivarez. "The Duke of Buckingham informs me that his highness has just received a letter from King James, wherein his majesty complains of the delay in regard to the marriage, and enjoins his son's immediate return."

"But this you will not permit, sire," said the Nuncio.

"I see not how I can prevent it," replied Philip.

"Heaven has placed the prince in your hands," rejoined the Nuncio, "and you will be wanting to yourself, sire — you will be wanting in duty to our Church — if you allow him to depart without first accomplishing his conversion."

"But you tell me he has absolutely refused," said Philip. "I cannot force him into compliance."

"Time and persuasion may accomplish much," remarked the Nuncio, with a significant smile.

"This sudden change in the prince's sentiments has been wrought by Buckingham," observed Olivarez, "whose aim is now to break off the match. His highness showed every disposition to recant, and would have done so, but for the baneful representations of his favourite."

"The prince is perfectly tractable, I am convinced," remarked the Nuncio. "Get rid of Buckingham, and there will be no further difficulty."

"But how shall we get rid of him?" exclaimed Philip. "He will not leave without the prince."

"He must, and shall," said Olivarez.

"But Charles will not remain after his favourite's departure," remarked the king.

"Not voluntarily, perhaps, sire," rejoined Olivarez, significantly; "but he will stay, nevertheless."

"Detain him, sire," said the Nuncio. "Let him not escape from your hands, or you will be greatly to blame. His captivity — if captivity it can be called — will neither be irksome nor of long duration, for if the present adverse influence be removed, I will engage that his conversion shall be speedily accomplished. Your duty to the Church is paramount to every other consideration. I call upon you to assist in bringing back Charles Stuart to the fold."

Before Philip could make any reply, an usher announced the prince and the Duke of Buckingham.

"Be firm, sire," said the Nuncio, rising to depart.

"Stay," cried Philip. "I wish you to be present at this interview."

After the customary greetings had passed between Charles and the king, Philip remarked:

"Your highness, I understand, has just received a letter from the king your father?"

"I have, sire," replied Charles; "and it is in reference to that letter that I have come to your majesty. My immediate return to England appears absolutely necessary. The king my father complains sadly of my prolonged absence. His health is declining, as your majesty is aware, and he needs my attention. If there were any likelihood of an early completion of the marriage-treaty, his majesty would consent to my sojourn here till the affair could be settled, but as he cannot anticipate this, he has recalled me. I need not say that the necessity I am under of obeying his orders is a great grief to me, but I cannot refuse compliance with them. I have therefore come to announce my early departure to your majesty, and to thank you for the truly royal hospitality you have shown me during my stay." After a brief pause, he added, "In regard to the marriage, I have this proposition to make. On the arrival of the dispensation, the ceremony can be performed by proxy, and I will entreat your majesty to be my representative on the occasion."

"I would fain hope that such a course may be avoided," said Olivarez. "If your highness departs while the treaty is still in abeyance, it will be thought that the marriage is broken off."

"Is there any chance that the marriage will take place soon?" said Buckingham.

"When we obtain the dispensation from his Holi-

ness there shall be no further delay on our part," replied Olivarez.

"That has ever been the answer," said Buckingham. "My royal master's patience is exhausted, and indeed he entertains the belief that the Pope will not grant the dispensation."

"There he is wrong, my lord duke," remarked the Nuncio. "His Holiness earnestly desires the fulfilment of the match, and will promote it to the utmost of his power. I authorise you to convey my assurance to King James, that so far as the Sovereign Pontiff is concerned there shall be little further delay. The affair, I hope, will be speedily settled."

"But upon what terms?" demanded Buckingham.

"Upon terms that will be perfectly satisfactory to the prince, I make no doubt," said the Nuncio.

"His highness must feel grateful for the Pope's consideration," said Buckingham.

"I entreat your highness to continue my guest a little longer," said Philip. "Your sudden departure will distress the Infanta, and on her account I urge you to stay, if only for a few weeks, when I trust the matter may be completed. The Duke of Buckingham can proceed to England at once. His presence will be a consolation to your royal father, and he can give the king assurance of your speedy arrival with your bride."

"Can I, with safety, give him such assurance, sire?" asked the duke.

"Most certainly," interposed Olivarez.

"Does this arrangement meet with your highness's approval?" said Buckingham, addressing Charles. "Am I to go alone? I do not think the king your father will be satisfied."

"I am sure he will not," said Charles. "Despite the inducements held out to me by your majesty, I must therefore adhere to my plan."

"Your highness will do wrong to depart," said the Nuncio. "Let the Duke of Buckingham go first, as proposed by his majesty."

"On all accounts I urge your highness to stay for a brief period," added Olivarez.

"You will not disoblige me by leaving me thus suddenly, prince," said Philip. "I really cannot part with you."

"But I cannot disobey the king my father, sire. He has recalled me."

"Send word by his grace that I will not let you go," said Philip.

"Were I to send such a message as that, he would think I am detained," replied Charles.

"What matter if he should think so?" remarked Olivarez.

"Prince," said Buckingham to Charles, "you were entrusted to my charge by your royal father.

I cannot consent that you should remain here after my departure. You have been summoned by the king, and must return to England."

"Must return!" echoed Olivarez. "Your presumption goes too far, my lord. I trust his highness will convince you that you have no authority over him."

"Your excellency had best speak out," said Buckingham, "and tell his highness, in plain terms, that he is a prisoner. If such be the case, I am a prisoner likewise, for I shall not depart without him."

"You will leave Madrid within twenty-four hours, my lord duke," said Philip.

"With the prince, sire?"

"Alone," rejoined the king.

"I cannot misunderstand this injunction, sire," said Charles. "I now see the position in which I have placed myself. I came here because I believed — and would have maintained the belief, if called upon — that Philip IV. of Spain was the soul of loyalty and honour. It seems I was mistaken."

"His majesty acts by my advice, prince," said Olivarez. "He knows that the Duke of Buckingham is animated by a spirit of determined hostility to himself and his cabinet — that he is secretly opposed to the match — and desiring that you should not be subjected to such baneful influence, he re-

moves him. If his majesty seeks to detain you for a short time longer, it is merely in the hope — in the belief, indeed — that all will be satisfactorily arranged."

"Are you willing to remain, prince?" said Philip.

"Your majesty has prevented me from answering the question," said Charles.

"Hear me, sire," said Buckingham. "The English fleet has arrived off Santander. I scarcely think the Earl of Rutland, who commands it, will be willing to sail without the prince."

"His majesty will treat that threat with the scorn it deserves," remarked Olivarez, disdainfully.

"The prince shall leave Spain in any manner he pleases," said Philip.

"Sire!" exclaimed Olivarez.

"The prince, I repeat, is free to depart now, or at any time," said Philip. "Far be it from me to detain him against his inclinations."

"Then I have misunderstood you, sire," cried Charles.

"You have," replied Philip, disregarding the looks addressed to him by Olivarez and the Nuncio. "If I have displayed over-anxiety to detain you, it has been from the belief that we could arrange the matter. But I will say no more on this head. I leave the decision entirely to yourself. If your departure is abrupt, it will be thought that our good

understanding has been interrupted. Stay with me a week longer, and I shall be content."

"I will gladly do so," replied Charles, "but I cannot send away the Duke of Buckingham."

"Let him stay, then," said Philip.

"All chance of accomplishing our object is at an end," whispered Olivarez to the Nuncio.

"Something may be done in a week," rejoined the latter.

"Not since Buckingham is allowed to remain," said Olivarez.

"I am sorry to lose you so soon, prince," said Philip, "but I will do my best to make the remainder of your stay agreeable to you."

"Your majesty has done far too much already," returned Charles. "I shall write to the king my father announcing my immediate return."

Making an obeisance to the king, he then withdrew with Buckingham.

II.

The Cloak and the Sword.

MIDNIGHT.

A coach drove into the Prado, and set down two cavaliers, who, bidding the coachman await their return, proceeded along the footpath leading in the direction of the Puerta de Recoletos.

They were muffled in their cloaks, and wore their hats pulled over the brow, so as effectually to conceal their features. That they were bound upon some amorous errand was certain. Each carried a dark lantern beneath his mantle, and one of them was provided with a rope-ladder. The points of their long rapiers appeared below their cloaks.

They moved along in silence, unconscious that they were cautiously followed by two other persons muffled in cloaks like themselves, and armed in like manner, who had issued from among the trees skirting the road.

At length the foremost gallants came to a large casa, in front of which was a garden surrounded by high walls like those of a convent. In this wall there was a gate, which they tried, hoping it might be left unfastened, but it did not yield. They next glanced around, but could perceive no one, for those who followed had concealed themselves.

Apprehending no danger, the gallants proceeded with their work. Quickly securing the rope-ladder to the top of the wall, they mounted, drew the ladder after them, and descended on the other side.

As soon as they had disappeared, the two persons who were watching them came up, and one of them remarked to the other:

“Rose’s information was correct. They are about to make the attempt.”

"Shall we give the alarm?" rejoined the other.

"No, let us wait here," returned the first speaker. "They are sure to come out by this gate."

Leaving them to keep watch, we will now follow the two gallants, who had obtained admittance to the garden.

Moving with noiseless footsteps, and keeping close to the wall, they proceeded towards the casa, but on nearing it could discern no sign that they were expected. All seemed buried in repose. They did not dare to give any signal to make known their presence, but waited patiently.

At last the slight creaking of a casement announced that some one was coming forth, and in another moment a female figure, wrapped in a mantilla, and with her features concealed by a black velvet mask, was seen upon the terrace.

Not doubting for a moment that it was Casilda whom he beheld, Graham flew towards her, and would have given utterance to a few passionate words expressive of his delight, but she checked him by a gesture imposing silence, and they then hurried towards the garden gate.

"Have you the key?" asked Graham, as they reached it.

Without a word she gave it to him, and in another moment the gate was unlocked.

"Now you are mine — mine only, Casilda," cried Graham. "You quit your father's house to become my bride."

Even to this address the masked female made no reply, and the door being opened, Graham started back, on perceiving the two cavaliers stationed outside.

"Confusion!" he exclaimed. "We are discovered. What is to be done?"

For a moment he remained irresolute, not knowing whether to advance or retreat, but then deciding upon the bolder course, he cried:

"Who are you, señores? — and what do you want?"

"Who we are matters little," replied a voice, which Graham at once recognised as that of Don Christobal. "We are here to protect the Conde Saldana from robbers."

"We are caballeros, as we will quickly convince you, not robbers," rejoined Graham, haughtily.

"The Conde de Saldana will account you the worst of robbers, for you are attempting to steal from him his chief treasure — his daughter. Luckily, we have been informed of your purpose, and are in time to prevent it."

"We have allowed you to proceed thus far with your project, in order that you should not be able to deny it," said the other, whose voice proclaimed him to be Don Pompeo.

"Rose has betrayed us! Fool that I was to trust her!" cried Graham. "Our scheme is defeated," he added in a low voice to the masked female. "Regain the house as quickly as you can, and leave us to settle with them."

But she clung to him as if she could not tear herself away.

"Forgive me for what I have done, Sir Richard," she murmured. "I was impelled to it by jealousy."

"This is not Casilda's voice," cried Graham, starting. "Unmask yourself at once, señora, and satisfy my doubts."

And as the damsel tremblingly obeyed, he held his lantern towards her, and discovered the features of Rose.

"Rose!" he exclaimed. "Malediction! have I been duped?"

"How is this, Don Ricardo?" cried Don Christobal, laughing derisively. "You have got the maid instead of the mistress."

"A capital jest," laughed Don Pompeo. "You have been fairly tricked, Don Ricardo — ha! ha! ha!"

"You shall find it no jest, I can promise you, señores," cried Graham, fiercely. "Away, minion!" he added to Rose, who fled towards the house.

No sooner was he freed from her, than Graham

drew his rapier, and springing through the gate, confronted the others. He was followed by De Cea, who closed the gate after him.

On seeing them advance in this hostile fashion, Don Christobal and Don Pompeo stepped back a few paces, drew their rapiers, and stood on guard.

"If I am not mistaken, the Duke de Cea is with you, señor," cried Don Pompeo.

"I am here," rejoined the duke.

"I am glad of it," said Don Pompeo. "I have an account to settle with you."

"You shall find me prompt to discharge it," said De Cea.

While these few words were exchanged, rapid preparations had been made on either side for the conflict.

Graham and De Cea threw their cloaks on the ground, but each retained his dark lantern. Their adversaries unfastened their mantles, but held them on the left arm for use, offensive and defensive, in the fight.

"Do not neglect my instructions, amigo," said De Cea in a low tone to Graham.

"Fear nothing," replied the other.

"Come on, Don Ricardo, I am ready for you," cried Don Christobal.

"And I for you, duke," added Don Pompeo to De Cea.

"We will not keep you waiting, señores," replied those addressed.

In another moment all four were engaged.

To any one who could have witnessed the conflict it would have been a curious sight. Graham held his lantern before him so as to throw its light upon his adversary, who awaited his attack with his cloak loosely wrapped round his left arm. It soon became evident that Don Christobal was very expert in the use of the cloak, for he contrived to obstruct all Graham's thrusts with it, and nearly succeeded in flinging it over his antagonist's head.

On his side, Graham, who had been well schooled by De Cea, resorted to many dexterous manoeuvres to perplex his opponent. Sometimes, he presented the lantern above his head — then held it in front — anon, after hiding it for a time behind his back, he produced it unexpectedly at the side, dazzling his antagonist with the light.

All this time the combatants were interchanging rapid passes, but as yet neither had sustained any injury.

At length, however, Don Christobal, fatigued with the weight of his cloak, dropped his left arm for a moment to rest it, and his foot becoming entangled in the mantle, he fell just as he was in the act of making a lunge.

Of course he was now entirely at Graham's

mercy, but the latter disdained to take advantage of the accident, and allowed him to rise, offering to renew the combat, but this Don Christobal declined.

Meantime, the conflict continued between the Cea and Don Pompeo, and threatened a serious termination, both adversaries being evidently infuriated, when shouts were heard, and a patrol could be seen hurrying to the spot.

"Fly! fly!" cried Don Christobal. "The watch are upon us. We shall all be arrested."

But the combatants were too much excited to heed the warning, and were still furiously engaged, when the patrol, consisting of a dozen men and an officer, all well armed, came up, and rushing between them, beat down their blades.

As not unfrequently happened on such occasions, those who had just been engaged in deadly strife now united together in an attack upon the watch.

In the struggle that ensued, Don Christobal's sword was broken, and being thus rendered defenceless, he was seized by the watch, who attempted to carry him off.

Just at the same moment Don Pompeo was overpowered and disarmed. Both cavaliers called out to their late opponents to rescue them, and they did not call in vain, for Graham and De Cea threw themselves with such fury on the patrol, that the latter were compelled to let go their captives.

All four then took to flight, speeding off in different directions, and, though the patrol attempted pursuit, they did not succeed in making a capture.

III

How Graham and De Cea went to the Escorial.

ALMOST in a state of distraction at the misadventure of the preceding night, Graham repaired, next day, to the Casa Saldana, determined, if possible, to obtain an interview with Casilda. But on his arrival at the casa, he ascertained, to his infinite vexation, that the conde had quitted Madrid at an early hour that morning, taking with him his daughter and her attendant, Rose.

Thus baffled, he sought De Cea. The young duke was as much perplexed as himself, having just discovered by means of his confidential valet, who was accustomed to convey billets to her, that Doña Flor had likewise quitted Madrid early that morning with her husband. The utmost mystery was observed in regard to their movements, no one appearing to know whither they were gone. Little doubt, however, was felt by De Cea that they had accompanied the conde and Casilda. All communication, therefore, was completely cut off between the lovers.

"Your chance is over, I fear, amigo," observed

De Cea. "Like your prince, you will be obliged to quit Spain without a wife. By this time, you may depend upon it, the old conde has put it out of your power to trouble him further by wedding his daughter to Don Christobal."

"But Casilda would never consent to such a step!" cried Graham. "She detests Don Christobal."

"Doña Flor detests Don Pompeo," rejoined De Cea; "but still he is her husband. You must bear the misfortune with philosophy."

"I came to you for aid and comfort in my distress," cried Graham. "But you drive me to despair."

"What would you have me say or do? I cannot give you false hopes. You have lost your mistress. But you have yourself to blame. You ought not to have trusted Rose."

"I see my error now it is too late," rejoined Graham, with a groan.

"Well, it will teach you caution, should you ever again be similarly circumstanced," remarked De Cea.

"That is impossible," cried Graham. "I can never love again."

"You think so now, but the wound will soon heal," rejoined De Cea. "I feel very disconsolate myself, but I have not come to the conclusion that

Doña Flor is my last love. A ride in the Prado will turn your thoughts into a new channel, and help to cheer you."

Graham assented to the proposition, though he had little hope of relief from it. As they were riding along the Calle de Alcala, they encountered Don Christobal, who was likewise on horseback. He eyed them sternly as they passed him.

"Are you still of the same opinion now?" remarked Graham to the young duke. "Do you believe he is married to Casilda?"

"I know not what to think," replied De Cea. "But I will have him watched."

The surveillance under which Don Christobal was placed by De Cea produced no satisfactory result. The object of it went about just as usual, appeared daily at court, rode in the Prado in the evening, and attended all the entertainments given by the king. But he declined to answer any inquiries as to the Conde de Saldana and his daughter.

Five days thus passed by — five anxious days to Graham — and still he had obtained no tidings whatever of Casilda, and as the period of the prince's departure was close at hand, he began to fear he should quit Spain without beholding her again.

On the afternoon of the sixth day he was alone

in his chamber at the palace, brooding upon his griefs, when a damsel, draped in a mantilla, suddenly entered.

Supposing it to be Casilda, he uttered a joyful cry, and started to his feet, but he was quickly undeceived, as the damsel disclosed her features.

"Rose!" he exclaimed, in anger and disappointment. "What brings you here? Are you come to rejoice over the misery you have caused? Be satisfied — your vengeance is complete."

"Think better of me," she rejoined. "I was goaded to what I did by jealousy. Listen to me for a few moments, and then pour all your rage upon me, if you please. Words cannot tell the force of the passion I have felt for you. My love has been utterly unrequited, but the flame, though it had nothing to feed upon but my own heart, did not become extinguished, but burnt fiercely as ever. I tried to smother it, but in vain. You should have pity for me, Sir Richard, for the pangs of jealousy are hard to bear, and mine were intolerable."

"I cannot pity you — I cannot forgive you," said Graham, sternly. "You have wronged me too deeply."

"Hear me out, and then judge me," she rejoined. "To understand my conduct, you must place yourself in my position. You must know how

fierce and ardent is my nature. Loving you as I did, I could not bear that another should possess you. Regardless of all consequences to myself, to you, and to Doña Casilda, I betrayed your plan, and the elopement was prevented."

"You avow your perfidy, and yet hope for forgiveness!" cried Graham. "Expect it not."

"What made me perfidious? What made me seek revenge? Love — love for you, Sir Richard — jealousy of Doña Casilda."

"Well, be content. You have wreaked your vengeance upon us both. Trouble me no more, but depart."

"A few words more, and I have done. I shall never see you again, Sir Richard, and I therefore desire to set myself right with you. I am not the base, vindictive creature you imagine, but a hapless, loving girl, who has been tortured well-nigh to madness by jealousy. Doña Casilda has forgiven me. Why should not you forgive me?"

"Can you undo the mischief you have done?" cried Graham.

"I can," she replied. "I have come to tell you so."

"Is Casilda not wedded to Don Christobal?" demanded Graham.

"She is not — she may still be yours."

"Heaven be thanked for the intelligence!" cried

Graham. "But can I believe you? You have deceived me once."

"You may trust me now," she rejoined. "I have repented of my conduct, and am anxious to repair the wrong I have done. I must render justice to Doña Casilda. I thought her incapable of devoted affection to you, but I was mistaken. She has convinced me that she loves you truly. When you learn what has occurred since that unlucky night, you will think so."

"Speak! I am all attention," cried Graham.

"Hear me, then, with patience," said Rose, "and reserve your reproaches till I have done. I own that I told the Conde de Saldana that you were about to carry off his daughter, and I also acquainted Don Christobal and Don Pompeo with the intended elopement. To prevent all possibility of escape, Doña Casilda was locked in her chamber, and I was permitted by the conde to personate her. Within an hour after the fray at the garden gate, the Conde de Saldana, Doña Casilda, and myself, had quitted the casa, and were posting along — none but the conde knew whither.

"Arrived at a small venta, we came to a halt, but did not alight from the carriage in which we travelled, and the cause of our stoppage was presently explained by the arrival of another coach containing Don Pompeo and Doña Flor. Then we

set forward again, but had not proceeded more than half a league, when we were overtaken by a horseman. It was Don Christobal. But he did not accompany us far. Doña Casilda refused to speak to him, and after a brief discourse with the conde, he returned to Madrid. We then pursued our way without further interruption, and early in the morning reached our destination, which proved to be the Escorial."

"The Escorial! exclaimed Graham. "Is Casilda there? I have sought in vain to discover her retreat."

"She has been at the Escorial ever since that night," rejoined Rose; "but precautions were taken by the conde to baffle your search, and that of the Duke de Cea. As Doña Flor was brought away at the same time by her husband, no communications could be made by her to the young duke. The marriage you dread so much would have taken place ere this, but for Doña Casilda's illness. The excitement she had gone through brought on fever. For two days her life was despaired of — and, indeed, she declared she would prefer death to a union with Don Christobal. Fortunately, no such sad fate awaited her, and I trust she is reserved for happier days. By careful nursing, Doña Flor and myself succeeded in bringing her through the

crisis of the fever, and she is now perfectly recovered."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed Graham, who had listened with deep interest to Rose's narration. "But surely the conde's heart must now be touched, and he will no longer insist upon wedding her to one whom she hates."

"The conde is a slave to his word," replied Rose, "and though bitterly deploring the necessity of the step, he holds himself bound to give his daughter to Don Christobal, unless he shall be released from his promise. If nothing happens to prevent it, the marriage will take place to-night."

"To-night!" exclaimed Graham. "To-night!"

"Ay, to-night," she repeated. "It was to tell you this that I came here. Had I been able to communicate with you before, I would have done so. But it was impossible. By the conde's order I have never been allowed to quit the palace since we arrived there. This morning, by the aid of Doña Flor, who induced a monk to let me out, I was able to effect my escape, and as I had money enough for the purpose I hired a coach, and drove off at once to Madrid."

"To-night!" exclaimed Graham, bewildered by the intelligence he had received. "You say the marriage is to take place to-night. Where is Don

Christobal? He was here — in Madrid — yesterday.”

“He may be here still, for aught I know,” she replied. “But he will be at the Escorial to-night.”

“Unless prevented — unless prevented,” cried Graham.”

“The marriage will be strictly private,” continued Rose. “None will be present at it save Don Pompeo and Doña Flor.”

“One not expected may be present,” rejoined Graham.

“If you appear I do not think the marriage can take place,” said Rose. “But now I have fulfilled my errand. I have told you all I had to say. Do you forgive me?”

“From my heart,” he rejoined.

“Enough! that is all I ask. May you be successful, Sir Richard! May you overcome all difficulties, and win your bride! And when you *have* won her, may you be happy with her!”

“Will you go with me to the Escorial, Rose? You may be of use?”

“No, my task is over. We must never meet again, Sir Richard — never! I have mastered my feelings, but I could not trust myself near you.”

“Perhaps it is better so,” sighed Graham. “Farewell, Rose. Take this purse, I entreat you.”

“I take it, because I need money to return to

France. Farewell for ever, Sir Richard! Think sometimes upon one whose fault has been that she loved you too well! Think of her, and pity her!"

Without waiting for a reply, she quitted the room.

Graham's first business was to seek the Duke de Cea, to whom he imparted what Rose had told him.

After some minutes' reflection, De Cea said:

"Well, you may as well make up your mind to it. Doña Casilda will be married to-night."

"But I cannot make up my mind to it," cried Graham. "I will stay the marriage."

"You cannot stay it. It is written in the book of fate."

"A truce to this jesting! It is ill timed," cried Graham, angrily. "Will you assist me?—will you accompany me to the Escorial?"

"I will," replied De Cea. "But I am not jesting when I assert that Casilda will be wedded to-night; but I do not say she will be wedded to Don Christobal."

"Ha! I see — but do you think that possible?"

"I think it certain, or I would not hold out the hope. Casilda shall be yours to-night."

"Oh, my dear friend!" exclaimed Graham, joyfully, "you raise me from despair. You make me the happiest of men."

"Calm yourself, amigo. A good deal has to be

done before the object can be accomplished, and you are not in a fit state to undertake it. Indeed, if you meddle in the matter it will fail — as certainly as the late attempt at elopement failed. Leave the affair to me, and I will answer for the result.”

“I put myself in your hands. You shall have the entire management of the business,” said Graham. “But let us start for the Escorial at once.”

“I shall not be ready for an hour,” said De Cea, with provoking calmness.

“Not for an hour!” cried Graham, impatiently. “I cannot wait so long.”

“You had better wait than lose Casilda.”

“Well, well — I will do anything you enjoin,” said Graham.

“My injunctions then are, that you amuse yourself in the best way you can for an hour, and then return to me. It is now four o’clock. At five I shall expect you.”

“At five to a moment I will be here,” said Graham.

“Do not trouble yourself further about Don Christobal. You will mar my project if you at all interfere.”

“I resign myself entirely to your guidance. I will not even question you further.”

“Good! then we shall succeed. Au revoir!”

Graham returned at the appointed time, and found De Cea ready for departure.

Shortly afterwards, the two young men, mounted on fleet Andalusian horses, and followed by half a dozen lacqueys in De Cea's superb livery, had passed through the Puerta de Segovia, and were galloping along the valley of Manzanares.

Ere long they entered upon an arid waste, which seemed to grow more dreary and desolate as they advanced. Burnt to a dark red crust by the scorching sun, the ground was strewn with enormous granite boulders. With the exception of an occasional solitary venta, not a single habitation was to be seen on the road.

The savage region was bounded on the right by the lofty range of the Guadarrama, and it was towards the foot of this mountainous barrier that the horsemen were riding.

Nearer and nearer they approached the mountains, and after half an hour's gradual ascent reached a higher elevation, whence the whole of the stony region they had tracked could be discerned.

But the country here was just as stern and savage as they had just quitted. Nothing showed that they were near one of the grandest palaces in Spain; there were no noble domains, no woods, no park, no circling wall. All was waste as before — parched, tawny ground, covered with rocks, and rugged

picturesque mountains towering in front, and seeming to check farther progress in that direction.

But the cavaliers had now nearly accomplished their rapid journey. A lofty crucifix, planted on the summit of a huge rounded grey boulder, and from the singularity of its position producing a most striking effect, told them they had reached the precincts of the wondrous convent-palace reared by Philip II.

Not far from the crucifix, which was regarded with becoming reverence by De Cea and the lacqueys, there was a large elaborately-wrought iron gateway, adorned with the arms of Castile and Aragon. Passing through it, and entering a sort of park, the horsemen rode on, and presently reached an eminence, whence a stupendous granite pile burst upon their gaze. The numerous gilded vanes, the lofty quadrangular towers, the steep sloping roofs, and grand central cupola of the mighty edifice — then, and indeed now, the largest structure in Spain — were lighted up by the beams of the setting sun. But the lower parts of the structure looked stern and sombre as the rugged mountains by which it was surrounded; and ere Graham had gazed at it for a few minutes, the radiance had disappeared, and left the whole mass gloomy and grey.

Shortly afterwards they dismounted, and consigning the horses to the lacqueys, who proceeded

with them to the royal stables, the two young men walked towards the principal entrance of the palace. Above the noble gateway were carved the royal arms of Spain, and above this vast stone escutcheon, in a niche, was set a statue of San Lorenzo, holding the instrument of his martyrdom in one hand, and a book in the other. Two gridirons were also sculptured in bold relief over the doorway.

The monastic character of the edifice was proclaimed to Graham by the numerous friars who were seen crossing it, or pacing to and fro along the cloisters.

But De Cea did not loiter in the court, but proceeded at once to the church.

IV.

The Tournament with Canes.

DESIROUS to show his royal guest as much honour on his departure as he had done on his arrival, Philip commanded a fresh series of festivities, which lasted without interruption for five days.

The concluding pageant, designed to eclipse all the previous shows in splendour, was a tournament with canes — an exhibition, borrowed from the Moors, in which the Spanish chivalry delighted.

Accordingly, lists were prepared in the principal court of the palace.

All the windows and balconies overlooking the court were decorated with tapestry and costly stuffs, and gorgeous canopies, embroidered with the royal arms, and adorned with curtains of cloth of gold and silver, were prepared for the queen and the Infanta, and all the principal ladies of the court.

When these windows and balconies were occupied by cavaliers and dames in their richest apparel, when the queen and the Infanta, or as she was now styled, the Princess of England, took their seats beneath the canopy designed for them, nothing could be more brilliant than the scene. The whole of the space outside the lists was filled with cavaliers in magnificent liveries, and the eye ranged over a forest of nodding plumes of various hues.

As usual, the Infanta was attired in white satin, and her sole ornaments were pearls; but she looked pale, and traces of anxiety were visible in her countenance. It was noticed also by the meninas who stood behind her, and by others who had an opportunity of closely watching her, that she took little interest in the spectacle.

The queen, however, appeared very lively, and seemed delighted with the show. She was magnificently dressed in silver brocade, and glittered with diamonds. Charles, who occupied a chair between

her majesty and the Infanta, was attired in white satin, with black and white plumes in his hat. He wore the Order of the Garter, suspended by a broad blue riband from his neck, and the enamelled Garter round his knee. Like the Infanta, he looked grave and sad.

When all the company had assembled, as we have related, a band of trumpets, drums, kettle-drums, and clarions, rode into the arena, making the court ring with their stirring strains. The men wore cassocks, embroidered with the royal arms, and were mounted on splendidly caparisoned horses.

After them followed the king's chief equerry, all his majesty's riders and pages in carnation-coloured satin, walking uncovered before a superbly equipped charger, intended for the king's use in the tournament. On either side of the steed, which looked proud of its magnificent trappings, walked two grooms of the stable, and behind followed as many farriers, carrying pouches of crimson velvet. Then came a troop of fifty cavaliers resplendent in the royal livery, mounted on bright bay horses, trapped in black and white velvet, with white bridles and silver musrols. The horses were covered with crimson velvet horse-cloths, embroidered with the king's name and the royal arms. The troop was followed by forty youths attached to the royal

stables, gallantly attired in doublets of carnation taffeta, and carrying the king's mounting-steps, which were made of ebony, covered with carnation taffeta fringed with gold.

Then came twelve mules of the largest size, each led by a couple of grooms, and sumptuously caparisoned in crimson velvet, embroidered with the royal arms, having silver bridles, silver bits, and silver poutrels, while their heads were adorned with lofty carnation and black plumes, striped with silver. These mules made a most gallant show, and formed the most curious part of the procession, as they were laden with bundles of canes, tipped with blunt iron points, intended to be used in the approaching skirmish.

Then followed four more trumpeters, doing their devoir, and after them came riders, grooms, and pages, in the livery of the Conde de Olivarez, conducting the steed belonging to his excellency, which was superbly trapped for the occasion. Then came a troop of fifty horsemen, all clad in the Conde-Duque's livery, and carrying white targets with white bandels.

Next came another squadron, headed by the Admiral of Castile, and apparelled in his livery of black satin guarded with gold lace. These cavaliers carried black targets with devices of gold.

A fourth squadron followed arrayed in white

satin laced and flowered with silver, and carrying silver bucklers. These were headed by the Conde de Monterey.

Two other troops succeeded, clad in the liveries of their leaders, and provided with bucklers having various devices. These were respectively commanded by Don Pedro de Toledo and the Duke de Sessa.

All these squadrons drew up in the first instance in the centre of the arena, and remained there until the king came forth from a pavilion placed at the extremity of the lists.

His majesty was attired in a riding suit of black taffeta, which became him well, and wore black and white plumes in his hat. He was accompanied by the Infante Don Carlos, who wore habiliments similar to those of his majesty, and by the Conde de Olivarez, who was attired in orange-tawny velvet.

As soon as Philip came forth, the grooms led his charger towards him, the steps were placed, and his majesty, who needed little help, was ceremoniously assisted to mount by the Conde de Olivarez.

On gaining the saddle, the king bowed graciously in reply to the acclamations of the assemblage, and then rode towards the centre of the arena, whither he was followed by Don Carlos and Olivarez, as soon as they had mounted their steeds.

Meanwhile, canes had been distributed among

the horsemen, and one of these slender javelins, light as a reed, together with a buckler, were delivered to his majesty by his equerry. On coming up, Don Carlos and Olivarez were similarly armed.

All being then in readiness, the trumpets sounded, and three squadrons wheeling round with great quickness, the king put himself at their head, and galloped with them to the upper extremity of the arena, where they faced about and stood still.

Simultaneously, a corresponding movement was executed with equal skill and rapidity by the three other squadrons, under the command of Olivarez. These posted themselves at the opposite end of the arena, facing the king's troops.

Again the trumpets sounded, and upon the instant the king and Olivarez rode against each other with extraordinary swiftness. Bending over their horses' necks like Moslems, they met in mid-career, shivering their javelins against each other's bucklers.

Ere turning, fresh lances were furnished them, and as they met again, Philip rose suddenly in his saddle, and delivered a downward thrust, which Olivarez caught upon his target.

In the third encounter they hurled their canes against each other, and the king's aim being the best, he was adjudged the victor. Great applause followed this chivalrous feat, which was admirably performed.

Other courses were then run between Don Carlos and the Marquis de Carpio, the Admiral of Castile and Don Pedro de Toledo, and the Duke de Sessa and the Conde de Monterey. No disaster occurred, and the prowess of the champions elicited loud applause.

These encounters between the leaders having come to an end, the opposing troops prepared for the grand *mélée*. The squadrons on either side extended so as to form two lines, and this was no sooner done than the trumpets sounded a charge.

Holding aloft their slender javelins, striking spurs in their steeds, and shouting furiously, the opposing hosts, respectively led by the king and Olivarez, dashed against each other, producing all the effect of a battle-charge. The ground quaked beneath the horses' feet. The shock when they met was terrible, and the splintering of the canes sounded like the crackling of trees. Several cavaliers were unhorsed, but none were much hurt, and all were quickly in the saddle again.

Fresh lances being quickly furnished to the horsemen, another charge took place, and amid a tremendous crackling of canes a dozen or more warriors rolled in the dust. As almost all of these owned Olivarez for leader, shouts were raised for the king.

As soon as the horsemen were in a condition to renew the conflict, they were arrayed against each

other by their leaders, and a third charge was made. But this time a skilful manœuvre was executed by Olivarez. As the opposing force rushed against him, he opened his lines and let them pass through, and then, turning quickly, attacked them in the rear, and put them to flight, pursuing them round the arena.

This flight and pursuit constituted the most exciting part of the spectacle, inasmuch as it not only gave the cavaliers an opportunity of displaying their horsemanship, but occasioned a great number of single combats, which were conducted with wonderful spirit.

In the end, Philip succeeded in rallying his scattered troops, and made a final charge against his opponent. The advantage he thus gained was so decisive, that by the general voice he was proclaimed the victor, and shouts resounded on all sides of "Viva el Rey! Dios guarde al Rey!"

The trumpets again sounded, the squadrons reformed with wonderful quickness, and then quitted the arena, under the command of their respective leaders, in as perfect order as if no engagement had taken place.

Philip and Olivarez remained to the last, and as his majesty rode out of the arena, the acclamations of the beholders were renewed. Having dismounted, the king repaired to the royal canopy, where he re-

ceived the congratulations of Charles, who had been greatly delighted with the spectacle.

The royal party then adjourned to the palace. An hour later a sumptuous banquet was served, at which all the principal lords and ladies of the court sat down. After the banquet, the grand suite of apartments were thrown open, and a ball concluded the festivities of the day.

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

BOOK VII.
THE ESCORIAL.

I.

The Church of the Escorial.

THE royal edifice of San Lorenzo of the Escorial, to which we must now return, cost its "holy founder," as Philip II. was termed by the grateful monks whom he lodged there, upwards of six millions of ducats in construction and embellishment. Its design originated in a vow made by Philip after the battle of Saint Quentin to erect a monastery and dedicate it to San Lorenzo, in place of one which his majesty had destroyed while bombarding the city.

The conventual palace was laid out in the form of a gridiron — the implement of torture used for the martyrdom of San Lorenzo, who, as is well known, was grilled alive.

Commenced in 1563 by Juan Bautista de Toledo, the gigantic pile, which was built of granite obtained from the neighbouring sierra, was not completed until twenty-one years later, by the celebrated Juan de Herrera. Indeed, it was not till nearly the close of the century that the work was absolutely ended.

From a seat hewn in the rock, amid a chesnut grove on the side of the mountain overlooking the

spot, Philip watched the progress of his vast design. The rocky bench occupied by the moody monarch still exists, and is known as La Silla de Rey.

The Escorial comprehended a palace, a convent, a church, and a royal mausoleum. In the Podridero, or royal vault, at the period of our history reposed three kings. In this splendid sepulchre the Emperor Charles V., Philip II., Philip III., and their wives and their descendants, have subsequently been laid.

The convent, which formed a considerable part of the vast structure, and which was endowed by its founder with a revenue of forty thousand crowns, was occupied by Hieronymite friars. An austere character pervaded the entire structure. There were an extraordinary number of apartments, many of them adorned with rare paintings and sculptures, but they were all gloomy. The magnificent library formed at the Escorial by Philip was removed to Madrid by his successor.

In planning the convent-palace it was the desire of its founder to build it of unsurpassable size and grandeur, and of such solid material that it should endure for ages. So far he succeeded, for the edifice still exists in all its primitive majesty. But he has stamped his own character upon the pile, and the gloom which it wore in his days hangs over it still. The monks are gone — their revenues have

been confiscated — but the Escorial is sadder and more sombre without them.

All the choicest paintings that adorned its chambers are gone too — and those that are left only speak of the glories of the past. Such was Philip's attachment to the structure, that, with his dying breath, he charged his son, as he would prosper, to take care of the Escorial.

By the Spaniards the mighty edifice is denominated the Eighth Wonder of the World.

And now let us rejoin the Duke de Cea and Graham, whom we left approaching the church.

On setting foot on the black and white marble pavement of the nave, Graham was awe-stricken by the grandeur and solemnity of the fane.

But though he admired the severe simplicity of its design — though he was charmed by the vaulted roof, in the midst of which rose the dome — though he noted the numerous shrines, at all of which tapers were burning, lighting up the magnificent pictures and exquisite statues with which the walls were adorned — his attention soon became riveted by the high altar, the wonders of which were fully revealed by an immense silver chandelier, suspended from the superbly-painted roof. By the light of this splendid lamp, which was kept ever burning, he could discern the superb altar-screen, approached by nineteen marble steps, the exquisite columns of agate

and jasper, the marvellous paintings, the gilt statues, and, above all, the magnificent tabernacle of gilt bronze, which it took seven years to fabricate.

But the objects that struck him most, and, indeed, startled him by their life-like effect, were the kneeling figures of gilt bronze ranged in the arcades on either side of the altar. The statues on the right were those of Philip II. with three of his wives — Queen Mary of England being omitted — and his unhappy son, Don Carlos. Those on the left were the Emperor Charles V., his wife Elisabeth, his daughter the Empress Maria, and his sisters Eleanora and Maria.

“Nothing can be finer than those bronze statues,” he remarked, in a low tone to De Cea.

“They are magnificent,” replied the other. “One might easily cheat oneself into the belief that they are living persons engaged in prayer.”

“For a moment I thought so,” said Graham.

“Examine them more closely, and you will see with what accuracy the minutest detail of the costume is given,” said De Cea. “The blazonry on the mantles of the two monarchs is admirable, as you can perceive even from this distance. In the Podridero, which lies beneath the high altar, rest all the personages you see there represented. Note, I pray you, the oratory on the right of the altar. In that small chamber Philip II. passed his latest

hours. Through yon little window, without quitting his couch, he could see the high altar, hear mass performed, and assist at the holy rites. There he breathed his last."

With noiseless footsteps Graham then moved towards the altar, and became so enthralled, that for some minutes he was not aware that De Cea had left him. Though somewhat surprised at his friend's disappearance, he continued his investigation of the marvels of the church, visiting the choir, the sacristy, the Pantheon, the Podridero, and the little chamber in which Philip died. And it was well there was so much to occupy his attention, for more than an hour elapsed before De Cea reappeared.

He was accompanied by Don Antonio Guino, and his looks gave augury of success.

"All goes well," he said. "I have seen Doña Flor. She will assist us."

"But what of Don Christobal?" said Graham.

"Neither he nor Don Pompeo can interfere with us. They are both detained in Madrid," replied De Cea.

"Amazement!" exclaimed Graham. "How has this been effected?"

"Come this way, and you shall learn," replied De Cea, leading him into an aisle on the right, whither they were followed by Don Antonio.

"Now you shall hear what I have done to serve you," said De Cea. "During the interval between your visit to me and our departure, I caused inquiries to be made at Don Christobal's house, and ascertained that both he and Don Pompeo were in Madrid, but that their horses were ordered for six o'clock, at which hour they intended to set out for the Escorial. On learning this, I immediately flew to Olivarez, and obtained an order from him enjoining their attendance upon the king at the palace this evening, at nine o'clock. The order could not be disobeyed. I gave it to Don Antonio, who undertook to deliver it, and then to follow me to the Escorial. This done, I set out tranquilly with you. Don Antonio will now tell you how the order was executed."

"It was a laughable scene," replied Don Antonio. "I waited to the last moment, and just as the two caballeros had mounted their horses and were about to depart, I rode up and delivered the order. You may imagine their rage and consternation. Don Pompeo swore terribly, but Don Christobal said little. However, there was nothing for it but obedience. They both dismounted, and Don Christobal called to one of his lacqueys, and bade him prepare to start instantly for the Escorial. 'I am going to the Escorial, señor,' I said, 'and will convey any message you may desire to send.'

'You will do me a great favour, señor, if you will deliver this ring to the Conde de Saldana,' he replied. 'He is at the palace — you will easily find him.' 'Ere two hours he shall have the ring, señor,' I replied. 'What are you about to do?' cried Don Pompeo. 'If you send that token, all will be at an end.' 'It is useless to pursue the matter further,' rejoined Don Christobal. 'Fate is against me. I had come to the fixed determination that the marriage should take place to-night, or not at all. There is now an end of the affair. 'But the marriage may take place to-morrow,' urged Don Pompeo. 'No, let her wed Don Ricardo, if she will. I have done with her," rejoined Don Christobal. 'Deliver the ring to the conde, señor,' he added to me. 'It shall be done without fail,' I returned. 'Have you any other message, señor?' 'None,' he replied. 'The conde will understand its import.' On this I left them, and galloped off to the Escorial. And here I am."

"Have you got the ring?" cried Graham.

"Here it is," replied Don Antonio. "But I cannot give it you. I have promised to deliver it to the Conde de Saldana."

"You shall deliver it to him," said De Cea. "Now come with me."

And they all three quitted the church, and entered the palace.

II.

The Ring.

ON that same evening, in a large apartment in the palace were assembled the Conde de Saldana, Doña Casilda, and Doña Flor. The chamber, though well lighted and richly furnished, looked sombre, as did all the rooms in the Escorial.

For some time previously the conde had been in a state of great irritation and anxiety, but as he did not expect much sympathy from his daughters, he strove to control his feelings, and contented himself with expressing his extreme surprise at the non-appearance of Don Christobal and Don Pompeo.

Though his daughters could have easily set his mind at rest on that score, they did not care to give him any information — and, indeed, took no notice of his impatience.

Just at nine o'clock the door opened, and an aged monk, clad in the dark robes of the order of San Geronimo, and whose venerable appearance was heightened by a long grey beard, entered the room.

He saluted the party, and after looking round with surprise, remarked:

“All is prepared for the marriage. But where is the bridegroom?”

"I fear the marriage cannot take place to-night, as arranged, good father," replied the conde. "I do not know what has happened to Don Christobal. He and Don Pompeo ought to have been here an hour ago."

"I only waited Padre Benito's arrival to acquaint you with the truth, father," said Doña Flor. "They are detained in Madrid by an order from the minister."

"What do I hear?" exclaimed the conde. "Don Christobal and Don Pompeo detained by Olivarez! Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I begged her to remain silent, father," interposed Casilda. "Because I hoped and believed that Padre Benito, whose heart I know to be filled with kindness and compassion, would aid me in my efforts to induce you to forego this hateful marriage. A few words from your lips," she added to the friar, "will move my father, and make him change his purpose, even at the latest moment. Do not let me be sacrificed."

"Sacrificed! daughter," exclaimed the friar.

"If I am wedded to Don Christobal, I shall be made miserable for life," cried Casilda. "Oh! save me, holy father! save me!"

"My heart is indeed touched by your entreaties, daughter," said Padre Benito, "and I would gladly preserve you from the misery you anticipate. Oh,

noble conde, let me add my supplications to those of your child. Reflect, while there is yet time. Do not let this irretrievable step be taken."

"Cease these entreaties, good father," replied the conde. "I cannot listen to them. I have given my promise to Don Christobal, and unless he releases me, the marriage must take place."

"I grieve to hear it," said the friar. "But Don Christobal may be moved."

"He is inflexible," rejoined the conde.

"Hear me, good father," said Casilda to the friar. "My heart is given to another. The conde knows it, and yet he will force me into this hateful match."

"I cannot help it," cried Saldana, in a voice of anguish. "Heaven knows I do not desire to make you miserable, my child! Heaven knows I would willingly give you to Don Ricardo, whom I love as a son! But I am bound by chains that cannot be sundered."

"Can nothing be done to avert this dire calamity?" said Padre Benito.

"Nothing! — nothing!" groaned the conde.

"Yes, yes, all can be set right," cried Doña Flor. "Come in! come in!" she added, opening a side-door, and giving admittance to Graham and the two others.

An irrepressible cry of delight burst from Ca-

silda, and, regardless of her father's presence, she flew towards her lover, who caught her in his arms.

For a few moments surprise kept the old conde silent, and Padre Benito made no remark, though he was too shrewd not to comprehend how matters stood.

"You will not mar their happiness, noble conde?" he said, at length.

"What am I to do?" groaned Saldana. "Don Christobal will not release me from my promise. I besought him to do so when we last met, but he refused."

"His absence bespeaks that he has abandoned the marriage," remarked Padre Benito.

"I should think so, if he had sent me any token," said the conde. "But I have received none."

"I have a token from Don Christobal," said Don Antonio. "Three hours ago I left him in Madrid, and he desired me to give you this ring, saying you would understand its import."

"I do! I do!" exclaimed Saldana, joyfully. "This ring releases me from my promise."

"Then you are free to bestow your daughter on Don Ricardo, señor conde," said De Cea. "Come forward," he added to Graham and Casilda, "and let him join your hands and give you his benediction."

"Their hands shall be joined at the altar, and that without delay," said the conde, embracing them. "Luckily all is prepared."

"And the bridegroom has been found," said Padre Benito.

"And Don Christobal himself has sent the wedding-ring," added De Cea.

"Stay! I have something to say before we proceed to the chapel," cried the conde. "Sir Richard Graham, I know you love my daughter. I give her to you. But we have not yet spoken of her wedding portion."

"Oh! señor conde, heed not that!" cried Graham.

"Pardon me, amigo, the matter is really important, and ought to be arranged," interposed De Cea.

"It *shall* be arranged," rejoined the conde. "You know I never break my word, Sir Richard."

"I have good reason to know it, señor conde," he replied.

"Well, then, Casilda will bring you the same dower she would have brought Don Christobal."

"Nobly done!" cried De Cea; while Casilda threw her arms about her father's neck.

"I thank you from my heart, señor conde," said Graham; "but I should have been well content with Casilda without a wedding portion."

"That's all very well," whispered De Cea. "But it is much better as it is. And now that all is settled, señor conde," he added aloud, "let us proceed to the chapel."

"With all my heart," replied Saldana.

Attendants were then summoned, and the door being thrown open, the conde gave his hand to Casilda, and the whole party proceeded to the chapel.

"I congratulate you heartily, amigo," said De Cea to Graham, as they took their way along the corridor. "You have got a charming bride and a splendid wedding portion. Though the prince may fail, you at least have succeeded in making a capital Spanish Match."

III.

Royal Presents.

THE last day that Charles had to spend in Madrid had now arrived, and he was conferring about his departure with Buckingham and Lord Kensington, when he received a visit from the Marquis de Avila, the king's principal rider.

The marquis, who was a very important-looking personage, came attended by four officers of the household, bearing presents for the prince.

"I am sent by the king to offer these gifts to

your highness, as a mark of his majesty's brotherly love," said Avila. "This pistol with the sword and dagger, set with diamonds, belonged to his majesty's illustrious grandsire, Philip II. With these cross-bows the Duke de Medina-Sidonia served his majesty. This pistol belonged to the Duke de Ossuna. These rapiers, of the finest workmanship of Toledo, were forged for the king himself, and have been used by his majesty. It is not on account of their value that his majesty begs your highness's acceptance of these weapons, but he conceives they may have some interest in your eyes."

"Gifts more acceptable could not possibly have been bestowed upon me," replied Charles. "I pray you tell his majesty so."

"I have more to offer on the part of his majesty," pursued Avila. "The king has sent your highness eighteen Spanish jennets, six Barbary horses of the purest race, as many mares, and twenty foals."

"And let me add, for I have seen them," said Archie, who had entered at the same time as the marquis, "that all these jennets, Barbary horses, mares, and foals, are covered with mantles of crimson velvet, garded with gold lace and embroidered with the royal arms."

"I cannot thank his majesty sufficiently," said Charles. "Wear this, I pray you, marquis, as a

token of my regard," he added, presenting him with a splendid diamond ring.

Avila bowed profoundly, placed the glittering gem upon his finger, and then, turning to Buckingham, said,

"His majesty sends your grace this diamond girdle."

"'Tis superb!" exclaimed Buckingham, enraptured.

"It is estimated at fifty thousand crowns, your grace," said Avila.

Buckingham detached a magnificent diamond clasp from his hat, and presented it to the marquis.

"Nay, my lord, this is too rich a gift," said Avila. "'Tis as valuable as the girdle."

"Keep it, I pray you," rejoined Buckingham.

Avila bowed profoundly.

"To you, my lord of Kensington," he said, "his majesty sends four Spanish horses and two hundred diamond buttons, as a mark of his regard."

"I fear I am forgotten," remarked Archie. "Tell his majesty I am beholden for what he has *not* sent."

"Thou art mistaken, gossip," rejoined Avila. "Thou wilt not go away empty handed. The king sends thee the largest donkey to be found in his dominions!"

"I humbly thank his majesty," replied Archie.

"The animal will remind me of — I won't say whom. I have no diamond rings or brooches to bestow upon your lordship, and you won't deign, I suppose, to accept this bauble."

In the course of the morning other presents were received by the prince. The queen sent him fifty skins of amber, and other costly perfumes. A casket filled with jewels was sent by the Infanta; and several paintings by the first masters, which had excited his admiration, were presented to him by Olivarez.

Charles made presents in return of equal magnificence, which were delivered by Lord Kensington.

To the king he sent a superb sword, the handle and scabbard of which were garnished with priceless gems. To the Infante Don Carlos he gave a ring containing a diamond of inestimable value set in a cup. To the Cardinal Infante Don Fernando he gave a pectoral of topazes and diamonds, having a large pendent pearl of the purest water. And to the Conde de Olivarez he gave a great diamond of eight carats, with a splendid pear-shaped pearl attached to it.

Other jewels were also presented by him to the Duke del Infantado, the Admiral of Castile and Leon, and the Conde de Puebla.

As faithful chroniclers, we are also bound to record that before leaving Madrid the prince bestowed

rich gifts upon all the gentlemen of the chamber and the king's pages. Moreover, he gratified the royal archers with four thousand crowns.

IV.

How Charles took Leave of the Infanta.

AN hour before noon Charles, accompanied by Buckingham, and attended by Bristol, Sir Walter Aston, Lord Kensington, and other English nobles, proceeded to the king's chapel in the palace, where he found Philip, the Infantes Don Carlos and Don Fernando, Olivarez, and the state council.

At the altar stood the Patriarch of the Indies.

Kneeling before this high ecclesiastical dignitary, Philip and Charles solemnly swore to observe the terms of the matrimonial treaty entered into between them.

The oath taken, they arose.

Turning towards the assemblage, Charles then delivered a sealed packet to Bristol, saying, as he gave it,

"This packet contains the procuration empowering his majesty the king, or his Highness the Infante Don Carlos, to marry the Lady Infanta Maria in my name. On the arrival of the Pope's dispensation, your lordship will deliver the proxy to the king."

"It shall be done as your highness directs," rejoined Bristol.

"On my part," said Philip, addressing the assemblage, "I undertake to act as proxy for his highness the prince. And I further engage that the marriage shall take place before Christmas, at the latest."

This ceremony over, Charles returned to his own apartments in the palace, and for the next two hours his time was fully occupied in receiving the various important personages who came to take formal leave of him.

Chief among these were the Papal Nuncio, the ambassadors of Germany and Venice, the corregidor of Madrid, the Conde de Gondamar, the members of the different councils, and the principal grandees of the court.

In bidding them adieu, Charles thanked them in cordial and gracious terms for their attention to him during his prolonged stay in Madrid. To each member of the state council, and to the corregidor, he presented a superb diamond ring.

Attended by several of his suite, Charles then repaired to the queen's apartments, for the purpose of taking formal leave of her majesty and the Infanta. He found them in a magnificent salon, surrounded by the principal ladies of the court, and attended by a host of gaily-attired pages and meninas.

The leave-taking was conducted with all the rigid formality of Spanish etiquette. The conversation chiefly turned upon the presents made to the two illustrious ladies by the prince. To the queen he gave a magnificent diamond of twenty carats, a triangle of brilliants, and earrings, each having a diamond as large as a bean. Her majesty, who was passionately fond of jewels, was enraptured with the gifts.

To the Countess Olivarez he gave a cross of large diamonds, and to the Duchess de Gandia and the Countess de Lemos, the queen's principal ladies, he gave similar ornaments.

To the Infanta he gave a necklace of two hundred and fifty large pear-shaped pearls, a collar of great balass rubies, with knots of pearls, and two sets of pearl earrings of incalculable value.

"Do you like those pearls, Maria?" he said to her, in a low voice. "They are the choicest of the king my father's gems."

"They are beautiful — most beautiful," she replied, in the same tone. "But I fear I shall never wear them."

The presentiment proved correct. The gems were subsequently returned to the prince.

As Charles took leave of the Infanta, in the cold and stately fashion prescribed by etiquette, he had much ado to maintain his firmness, and she

had equal difficulty in repressing her emotion. Her hand trembled, and her lips and cheeks were bloodless.

“Farewell, Maria!” he said.

“Adios, prince!” she murmured.

Fixing upon her a look she never forgot, and which quite as eloquently as words proclaimed the anguish of his heart, Charles quitted the salon with his attendants.

When he was gone, the Infanta's strength quite forsook her, and she swooned away.

V.

Wherein is recounted by an exalted Personage a long-promised Legend.

In the evening, a farewell fête was given to the prince by the Earl of Bristol.

The entertainment was of the most splendid description, and all the royal family, with the exception of the Infanta, who was slightly indisposed, honoured it with their presence. The principal salon was converted into a ball-room for the occasion, and here those devoted to the dance remained; but the evening being magnificent, many of the guests preferred wandering about the illuminated gardens.

Among those were the king and the royal party. After a few turns on the terrace, they seated them-

selves at the farther end of the lawn, where they were sufficiently removed from the sounds of revelry. Charles was with them, of course. Indeed, he and the king had been inseparable during the evening.

"This garden is very charming," remarked the queen.

"I thought it so when I first arrived at Madrid," replied Charles. "But since I have seen the gardens of the Buen Retiro, it appears insignificant."

"How comes the house to be so strangely designated?" she inquired.

"I am unable to inform your majesty," he replied. "Lord Bristol told me there was a legend attached to it, but he has never related it to me."

"I have heard the story, and will tell it you," said Philip. "It is a sort of family legend, for my grandsire is connected with it."

THE LEGEND OF THE HOUSE OF SEVEN CHIMNEYS.

"You must know, then," began the king, "that this house, which has obtained a designation so singular, was built about fifty years ago by the

Marquis de Xavalquinto, in the time of Philip II. Now the marquis was a very mysterious personage, and had even the reputation of being a magician, being addicted, it was said, to unlawful studies.

“In consequence of these rumours he was cited to appear before the Holy Inquisition, but nothing could be proved against him, and he was liberated. At the same time, certain papers found in his possession, and covered with cabalistic figures, which no one could understand, were ordered to be burnt. An odd circumstance then occurred. A small piece of parchment escaped the flames — indeed, it was the opinion of the official employed to destroy these writings that it would not burn. Be this as it may, it was quite certain that while the rest of the papers were consumed, this parchment remained untouched. Upon it were written several sentences, but in a character which the official could not decipher.

“Instead of delivering the parchment to the chief inquisitor, as was his duty, the knave kept it in his own possession, but he was speedily punished, for he fell grievously sick, and, when dying, told the priest who attended him what he had done, and gave him the paper. The priest did not entirely believe in the baneful influence of the parchment, but deeming it right to obey the injunctions of the dying man, he delivered the mys-

terious scroll to the grand inquisitor. It chanced that on that very day the inquisitor had an audience with the king, so, taking the parchment with him, he showed it to his majesty, telling him what had occurred.


“Philip regarded it with religious horror, but he at once perceived that the characters were Arabian, and sent for a person learned in that language to interpret them. When the scroll was shown to this man, he turned pale and trembled, but refused to communicate what he had found out to any other ear than that of his majesty. Upon this, Philip dismissed his attendants, and heard what the man had to say in private.

“Next day, without mentioning his design, Philip, accompanied by two attendants, went to Xavalquinto's mansion, and was very ceremoniously received by the old marquis, who humbly desired to know what had procured him the honour of a visit from his majesty.

“‘You shall know that presently, my lord,’ replied Philip, sternly. ‘Meantime, I wish to see the garden.’

“‘Your majesty has only to command,’ replied Xavalquinto.

“And he then conducted the king to the garden. Without bestowing a regard at any object, Philip selected a spot whence he could obtain a good view



of the house. Very possibly he stationed himself where we are now seated. After examining the structure for a few minutes, he said to Xavalquinto, fixing a searching glance upon him as he spoke,

“‘How many chimneys has your house, my lord?’

“‘Six, sire,’ replied the marquis, surprised at the question.

“‘There ought to be seven,’ said the king. ‘Let another be built without delay.’

“‘But, sire, another chimney will spoil the symmetry of the building,’ remonstrated Xavalquinto.

“‘No matter. I will have it done,’ rejoined Philip, peremptorily.

“‘I would rather your majesty would order me to pull down the mansion than so to disfigure it,’ said Xavalquinto.

“‘It will not be disfigured,’ said Philip. ‘Pull down that belvidere, and build the seventh chimney in its place.’

“‘Sire, that belvidere is my place of study — where I pursue my scientific labours — whence I consult the stars. Do not, I conjure you, compel me to destroy it. My fate is linked with that belvidere. If it falls, I shall fall.’

“‘How know you that?’ asked the king, sternly.

“‘The stars have told me so, sire.’

“‘Tut! this is idle,’ rejoined Philip. ‘You have

some other reason for refusing to obey me. But since you hesitate, I myself will do the work. I will build the seventh chimney.'

"'Will nothing turn you from your purpose, sire?'

"'Nothing,' replied the king. 'I am as inexorable as Satan would be to his bond slave.'

"Xavalquinto shook from head to foot at this observation, but partially recovering himself, he said:

"'You have sealed my doom, sire. But leave the task to me. I ask no further favour. If your majesty will come again to-morrow, you will find the work done.'

"'If you can complete it in so short a time, you must have quicker workmen than mine,' said the king. 'But let it be so. I will return at this hour to-morrow, and see what progress you have made. Till the work is done, you must remain a prisoner in your own house.'

"Xavalquinto bowed, and the king departed.

"When his majesty came again on the following day, he found the household of the marquis in great consternation. During the night strange noises had been heard, but no one got up to see what was the matter. In the morning the cause of these nocturnal disturbances was apparent. In the principal salon on the ground floor, in that very

room, in fact, where dancing is now going on, a panel had been removed, disclosing a fireplace, the existence of which no one had suspected.

"Philip immediately went to look at it, and after satisfying himself of the correctness of the information, he turned to the intendant, who accompanied him, and asked for the marquis.

"The marquis was gone.

"'Gone!' exclaimed the king angrily. 'He has broken his word. I ought to have placed a guard over him.'

"He then mounted to the belvidere, and on reaching it found a trap-door yawning wide open in the floor of the little turret.

"On looking into this aperture the funnel of a chimney could be perceived, which evidently communicated with the fireplace in the great salon.

"Here, then, was the Seventh Chimney. The work was done, but where was the marquis?

"'The devil must have flown away with him, sire,' remarked the intendant.

"Philip was of the same opinion, for he had learnt from the mysterious scroll that the marquis had bartered his soul to the Evil One. When the seventh chimney was completed Satan could claim fulfilment of the compact.

"Possibly this was so, for the marquis was never heard of more, though some of his household affirmed

that he had again fallen into the hands of the Holy Inquisition, and was burnt at an Auto da Fé. Let us hope the latter supposition was correct, since in that case his soul may have been saved.

“From the day of his disappearance, till now, Xavalquinto’s mansion has been known as the House of Seven Chimneys.”

The story was listened to with great apparent interest, especially by Charles, but the royal narrator did not give time for any remarks upon it, for at its conclusion he arose and returned to the house.

Passing through an open window looking upon the terrace, his majesty entered an ante-chamber communicating with the ball-room. Here were assembled the Earl of Bristol and several of his most distinguished guests.

After the king had taken his seat upon a fauteuil, he glanced at the group around him, and, perceiving De Cea, signed to him to approach.

“Where have you been, my lord?” he inquired. “You were not at the palace last night.”

“No, sire, I was at the Escorial, assisting at a marriage.”

"Indeed! Who has been married?" demanded Philip.

"The happy pair are in this room, sire," replied De Cea. "If you will cast your eyes round you will at once detect them."

"The only persons I behold, answering to such a description, are Sir Richard Graham and Doña Casilda," said the king. "But surely they cannot be married?"

"The ceremony was performed last night, sire."

"But, I trust, with the consent of the Conde de Saldana?" said Philip.

"With his full consent and approval, sire. Don Christobal liberated the conde from his promise, so that the only obstacle to the union was removed."

"Since that is so, all is well," replied Philip. "Let them approach."

And as Sir Richard Graham and his blushing bride came forward and made their obeisances, his majesty graciously offered them his congratulations.

"I hope you are not going to deprive us of one of the brightest ornaments of our court, Sir Richard?" said Philip, smiling.

"I must return to England with the prince, sire," returned Graham. "And I cannot leave my wife behind me."

"I wish I could induce Don Ricardo to remain

in Madrid, sire," remarked Casilda; "but, as he will go, I must accompany him."

"Nay, you are bound to do that," said the king. "But I hope you will bring him back soon. Has your highness been in the secret of this match?" he added, turning to Charles.

"I knew that Sir Richard was enamoured of the lady, sire," replied the prince. "But I scarcely expected the affair would terminate so happily. You are a fortunate man, Dick," he added to Graham.

"Your highness will say so when you learn what a prodigious dowry his bride has brought him," said De Cea.

"Well, Sir Richard," said the king, "I must again congratulate you upon the prize you have won. Others of your countrymen would do well to follow your example. And now, my lord, we must bid you good night," he added to the Earl of Bristol. "We thank you heartily for your entertainment."

Philip and the royal party then took their departure, and Charles soon afterwards quitted the fête. While crossing the entrance-hall accompanied by Buckingham, he encountered Olivarez, who attended him to his coach.

Before entering the carriage, Buckingham turned to Olivarez, and said haughtily:

"I bid your excellency farewell. I shall ever

remain the faithful servant of the King of Spain, of her majesty the queen, and of the Lady Infanta, and will render them all the good offices in my power. But to your excellency I make no professions of friendship. You have so systematically opposed me, and have striven so anxiously to thwart my purposes, that I cannot but regard you as an enemy."

"You regard me rightly, my lord," rejoined Olivarez. "I am your enemy, my lord — your implacable enemy."

And he turned upon his heel.

VI.

The Farewell at the Fresnada.

NEXT morning, Charles quitted Madrid, never to return thither.

He was attended by all the English nobles and gentlemen, forming his suite, and was accompanied as far as the Escorial by the king, the whole of the royal family, and the principal grandees of the court.

The cortége was preceded by a guard of archers, under the command of Don Melchior del Alcazar, and comprised a long train of carriages and horse-litters, with a troop of seven hundred well-mounted and superbly arrayed horsemen.

At the Escorial Charles remained for two days, where he was entertained with regal hospitality by Philip, and shown all the wonders of the mighty convent-palace.

On the third day, the whole party proceeded, at an early hour, to the Fresnada, a royal hunting-seat, situated in a wood on the side of the Guadarrama, about a league from the Escorial. In this wood a stag was chased and killed, after which a banquet was spread beneath the trees.

The parting hour had now arrived. Charles tenderly embraced the king; took leave of the queen and the two princes; and bade a last adieu to the Infanta.

A last adieu, we say, for he never beheld her more.

A little marble column reared in the wood marks the spot where this parting occurred.

Shortly after the farewell at the Fresnada, two troops might be seen moving in opposite directions; one descending towards the Escorial, the other climbing the rugged sides of the Guadarrama.

Charles found the fleet awaiting him at Santander. On embarking on the *Prince Royal*, he observed to the Earl of Rutland, who received him, and congratulated him on his safe arrival, "It was great weakness and folly in Olivarez to let me go so easily, after treating me so badly."

Buckingham took care that the Spanish Match should be broken off, but he quickly made up another, and fulfilled his promise by finding Charles a consort in Henriette Marie.

Would the prince have been happier if he had wedded the Infanta?

THE END.

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